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T H I R T Y  
L E T T E R S  
O N  
V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

WHETHER these are real letters, or whether the author chose to throw his observations into the epistolary form, is a point of no great consequence. The invention of a story to shew how they came into the editor's hands is by no means difficult.—A parcel of papers rescued from the trunk-maker or pastry-cook, has saved many

## vi. ADVERTISEMENT.

many an author from perishing. CERVANTES and STERNE were not above such shifts ; but they have served so often, that now, even the truth, tho' without the least mixture of the marvellous, passes for invention.

Should these little volumes contain any new and useful observations on men and things, it is a sufficient reason for their publication—if the physic be wholesome, it is no matter under what form it is administered.

LETTERS.

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# L E T T E R S.

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## L E T T E R I.

**S**INCE you request that our correspondence should be out of the beaten track, be it so. My retirement from the world will naturally give an air of peculiarity to my sentiments, which perhaps may entertain where it does not convince. In justice to myself, let me  
B observe,

observe, that truth sometimes does not strike us without the assistance of custom ; but so great is the force of custom, that, unassisted by truth, it has worked the greatest miracles. Need I bring for proof the quantity of nonsense in all the arts, sciences, and even religion itself, which it has sanctified ? As possibly in the course of my letters to you I may attack some received doctrines on each of these subjects, let not what I advance be instantly rejected, because contrary to an opinion founded on prejudice ; but, as much as possible, divest yourself of the partiality acquired by habit, and if at last you should not agree with me, I shall suspect my sentiments to be peculiar and not just.

Tho'



Tho' truth may want the assistance of use before we feel its force, yet when it is really felt, we detest what custom only made us like. The difficulty is to procure for truth a fair examination. The multitude is always against it. The first discovery in any thing is considered as an encroachment upon property, a property become sacred by possession. Discoverers are accordingly treated as criminals, and must have good luck to escape execution.

I mean not to rank myself with such bold adventurers; I am neither ambitious of the honour, or the danger, of enlightening the world, but, if I can soften prejudices which I cannot remove—if I

can loosen the fetters of custom where I cannot altogether unbind them, and engage you to think for yourself—my end will be answered, and my trouble fully repaid.

Adieu ! &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R II

\* \* \* \* \*

IT is natural to suppose, that people originally judged of things by their senses and immediate perceptions. By degrees they found that their senses were not infallible, and that things frequently contradicted their first appearance. This, at last, was pushed to an extravagance ; and certain philosophers endeavoured to persuade mankind, that the senses deceive us so often, that we can never depend on them—that we cannot tell whether we are in motion or at rest, asleep or awake,

with many other such absurdities. They used the same ingenuity with the mental sense. Some ancient sage was asked, "Who is the richest man?" if he had replied "He that has most money," the answer would have been natural and just—what he did say, every one knows. We have suffered ourselves to be imposed on so long, that at last we begin to impose on ourselves.

Riches, cards, and duelling, have been constantly abused, written, and preached against; and yet men will still hoard, play, and fight. Why should they? All universal passions we may fairly pronounce to be natural, and should be treated with respect. The gratification of our passions are our greatest pleasures,

fures, and he that has most gratifications is of course the happiest man. This, as a general assertion, is true, and it is true also in particulars, provided we pay no more for pleasure than it is worth.

Every man should endeavour to be rich. He that has money may possess every thing that is transferable—this is a sufficient inducement to procure it. Nay, if he possesses nothing but his money, if he considers it as the end, as well as the means, it is still right to be rich: for, knowing that he has it in his power to procure every thing, he is as well satisfied as if the thing itself was in his possession. This is the true source of the miser's pleasure; and a great pleasure it is! A moral

philosopher may tell him, “that man does not live for himself alone, and that he hurts the community by withholding what would be of use to it”—this he thinks to be weak reasoning. The sneers of wits signify as little; for he knows they would be glad to be rich if they could. He feels that the pleasure arising from the possession of riches, whether used or not, is too great to be given up for all the wit, or even the strongest arguments that can be brought against it.

It seems to be agreed, that card-playing proceeds entirely from avarice—tho’ this may sometimes be the motive, yet it may with more probability be derived from other, and more general principles.

The

The mind of man naturally requires employment, and that employment is most agreeable, which engages, without fatiguing the attention. There is nothing for this purpose of such universal attraction as cards. The fine arts and belles lettres can only be enjoyed by those who have a genius for them—other studies and amusements have their particular charm, but cards are the universal amusement in every country where they are known. The alternate changes in the play, the hope upon the taking up a new hand, and the triumph of getting a game, made more compleat from the fear of losing it, keep the mind in a perpetual agitation, which is found by experience to be too agreeable to be  
 quitted

quitted for any other consideration. The stake played for is a quickener of these sensations, but not the cause. Children who play for nothing feel what I have been describing perhaps in a more exquisite degree than he who engages for thousands. A state of inaction is of all others the most dreadful ! and it is to avoid this inaction that we seek employment, though at the expence of health, temper, and fortune. This subject is finely touched by Abbé du Bos, in his reflexions upon poetry, &c. indeed he carries it so far as to say, that the pleasure arising from an extraordinary agitation of the mind, is frequently so great as to stifle humanity ; and from hence arises the entertainment of the common people



people at executions, and of the better sort at tragedies. Tho' in this last instance he may be mistaken; yet, the delight we feel in reading the actions of a hero may be referred to this cause. The moralist censures the taste of those who can be pleased with the actions of an Alexander or a Nadir Shah—the Truth is, we do not approve the actions; but the relation of them causes that agitation of the mind which we find to be pleasant. The reign of Henry the seventh, tho' of the greatest consequence to this nation, does not interest us like the contentions of York and Lancaster by which the kingdom was ruined.—It is in vain that we are told that scenes of war and bloodshed can  
give

give no pleasure to a good mind, and that the true hero is he who cultivates the arts of peace, he by whom men are benefited not he by whom they are destroyed—it is to no purpose—we sleep over the actions of quiet goodness, while aspiring, destroying greatness, claims and commands our attention.

Duelling has in many countries a law against it—but can never be prevented. The law can inflict no greater penalty for any breach of it than death; which the duellist contemns.—There are also some cases of injury which the law cannot prevent, nor punish when committed—these must be redressed by the man who suffers, and by him *only*. He is prompted to do this by something

thing antecedent, and superior to all law, and by a desire as eager as hunger or lust; so that it is as easy for law to prevent or restrain the two latter as the former. Very luckily for us, occasions for the gratifications of this passion occur but seldom: and tho' a man may be restrained from a duel by personal fear, which is its only counteractor, there are very few instances, perhaps none, of its being prevented by considering it ~~for~~ a breach of the law. In the beginning of the last century duels were ~~as~~ frequent, particularly in France, as to occasion a severe edict to prevent them—indeed by their frequency, they were by degrees improved into combats

bats of two, three, and sometimes more of a side.—In those days a French nobleman was making up his party to decide a quarrel with another man of equal rank, it came to the King's ears, who sent to him one of the most rising men at court with a command to desist, assuring him of the strict execution of the edict in case of disobedience.—Every one knows the attachment of the French to their sovereign, but yet it proved weak when set against this all-powerful passion. The nobleman not only refused to obey the king, but actually engaged the messenger to be one of his party.

The above seem to be the principal reasons why riches, cards, and  
duelling

duelling have so deep a root in the mind of man—but there are others which come in aid. The desire of superiority is of itself almost sufficient to produce this great effect.

Believe me ever yours, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R III.

I Cannot comply with your desire —a regular dissertation is above me—but if you will take my thoughts as they occur, the honour of methodizing them shall be yours.

Languages are termed rough and smooth, weak or expressive, frequently without reason.—As these are comparative terms, they change their application according to circumstances. The French is said to be a smooth or rough language, when compared with the German  
or

or Italian. Perhaps this is true, and yet we should not determine too hastily. In appearance, there are more vowels in the Italian language than in the French; but in pronunciation the French lose many Consonants, and the Italians none: and yet in French, so great is the irregularity of that language, many consonants are pronounced which are not written — smoothness or roughness must therefore depend on the ear alone, yet how far a Language is weak or expressive, may be treated of and determined with precision.

Every sentence may be considered as the picture of an idea; the quicker that picture is presented to the mind, the stronger is its

C                      Impression,

Impression. That language then which is shortest, is the most expressive. If we should fix on any language as being in general the most concise, yet, if in some instances it is more diffuse than another, then, in those instances the latter is most expressive. This, I believe, is an universal rule, and without exception.

Let us for the present suppose Latin to be more expressive, because shorter, than any modern language, and compare it with English in some examples, just as they occur. *Captus oculis* and *cæcus*—are used for the same thing—the last is more expressive than the first, and both less so than blind : a single syllable does the office of many. How much  
more



more forcibly does it strike us to be told that our friend is dead, than *mortuus est*, or *Mors continuo ipsum occupavit*? This last is indeed poetical, if we suppose death a person. Tho' I just now said that Latin was closer in its expression than any modern language, it was only in compliance with common opinion; for I have great reason to believe that it yields in this respect to English: The latin hexameter and Terence's line being with ease included in our heroic verse, which is not so long by many syllables. There have been many pieces of English poetry translated into Latin, and, in general nothing can read more dead and unanimated. In the eighth volume of the Spectator is a trans-

lation of the famous soliloquy in the Play of Cato—compare it with the original, and observe how the same thought is strong in English and weak in Latin, occasioned entirely by its being close in one language, and diffuse in the other: for, as much as one sentence exceeds another in length, in the same proportion does it fail in expression.

Translations, most commonly, are more verbose than their original, which is one reason for their weakness; whenever they are less so, they are stronger. Suppose we should find in a French author these phrases, *Un Canon de neuf livres de Balle—Un Vaisseau du Roi du quatre vingt dix Pieces du Canon*; and they were rendered into English by *a nine-pounder—A ninety-gun*

*gun ship*—is not the translation more spirited than the original? I purposely chose a phrase with as little matter in it as possible, where the meaning could not be mistaken, and in which there was no variety of expression, that the trial might be fairer. I have heard that the German is an expressive language—it may be so, I do not understand it; but I can perceive that, for the most part, the words are very long, which makes against its being so. French, and Italian particularly, are much more diffuse than English. Translations from these languages have often a force that the originals wanted; and this not owing to the English being a stronger language in *sound*, as some

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have

*supposed*

have ~~imagined~~, but to strength occasioned by brevity.

Perhaps it may be imagined, that those words which carry their signification with them should be most expressive, whether long or short; that is, when they are derived from, or compounded of known words, which express that signification. But this is not so. When we say *adieu*, *farewell*—we mean no more than a ceremony at parting.—No one considers *adieu* as a recommendation to God, or *farewell* as a wish for happiness.—Frequent use destroys all idea of derivation. But if we speak a compound or self-significative word that is not common, we perceive the derivation of it.

Thus

Thus if a Londoner says *butter-milk*, he has an idea of something compounded of butter and milk ; but to an Irishman or Hollander, it is as simple an idea as either of the words taken separately, is to us.

It is but late that our orthography was fixed even in the most common words. Two hundred years ago, every person spelt as he liked : a privilege enjoyed still later than that period by “ royal and noble authors,” who seem, in this instance, to claim the liberty enjoyed by their ancestors. Since the time orthography has been thought of some consequence, we have attended partly to pronunciation, tho’ chiefly to derivation. But, in some cases, where we should

altogether have spelt according to derivation, we have taken pronunciation for our guide. And this has occasioned some confusion; for instance *naught* is *bad*—*nought* is *nothing*; these terms were long confounded, and even now are not kept perfectly distinct, which has occasioned *ought* to be written *aught*. *Wrapt* is enveloped—*rapt* is hurried away, or totally possessed: the first of these is frequently used for the last, by some of our modern poets. *Marry* is an asseveration—*marry*, to give in marriage—the spelling these words the same, confounds them together; we should have preserved for the first, the real word *mary*. It was a common thing formerly to swear  
by

by *Mary*, the *a* in which was pronounced broad, as the Priests of that time did the Latin *Maria*, from whom the common people took the pronounciation. In one of the pieces in the first volume of the collection of old plays, it frequently occurs, and is spelt as a proper name, *Marie*. Permit me to observe, that the Editor, by modernizing the spelling in the other volumes, has prevented their being made this use of, as they might have shewed the progress of orthography as well as of dramatic poetry.

In the reign of James the first were many attempts to reduce orthography altogether to pronounciation. In our time we have seen some attempts to bring it altogether

ther

ther from derivation—but surely both were wrong. Whoever reads Howel's letters, or Dr. Newton's Milton, will see, that by a partial principle too generally adopted, they have made of the English language “a very fantastical banquet—just so many strange dishes!”

There are many inversions of phrases used in poetry which are contrary to the genius of our language. In the translation of the Iliad there frequently occurs “thunders the sky”——“totters the ground,” meaning that “the sky thunders” and “the ground totters.” This change of position has the authority of some of our best poets, tho' it frequently obscures the sense, and sometimes  
makes



makes it directly contrary to what is intended to be expressed. Our language does not, with ease, admit of the nominative after the verb. If we read, tho' in poetry, "shakes the ground" we do not readily understand that "the ground shakes," but rather refer to some antecedent nominative that has produced this effect. To adopt the construction of the ancient languages is as awkward as to adopt their measures. You will understand this to be meant as a general observation, the truth of which is not destroyed by a few exceptions where the inversion may be happily used. The sense in these verses of Pope "halts" as much by Roman construction,

construction, as the Rhythmus in Sidney does by “ Roman feet.”

In reading Latin and Greek we are obliged to keep the sense suspended until we come to the end of the period, but it is not so in any modern language that I know of, except now and then in Italian poetry; so that there is a sameness of construction in all of them when compared with the ancient languages. Now, this suspension of the sense is surely no advantage, therefore if it were possible to make English like Latin and Greek in this respect, it would hurt the language.

In another letter I may possibly resume this subject.

I am, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R IV.

**O**UR greatest mistake in the pursuit of happiness as well as of science, is to judge by the perceptions of others, and not by our own. This perversion is admirably ridiculed in some comedy, in which a young fellow naturally sober, gives into debaucheries merely because they are fashionable. “I am horrid sick”—says he—“I am tired to death—I hate cards—but it is *life* for all that!”

My friend, examine your heart—  
You yourself are the best judge of  
what

what contributes to your own happiness. Is the pleasure of shooting equal to the fatigue? . . . Put down the gun. Is the cry of the hounds a sufficient charm to remove the fear of breaking your neck? . . . Come off your horse.—And in pure charity let me advise the “*impatient fisher*” to convert his rod into a walking stick, jemmy, and switch. “For what? Do not gentlemen love country diversions?” But if *you* do not, why should you be governed by *their* inclinations?

Mr. Connoisseur, do not pretend raptures at music, you know you have no ear.—Stare not at that picture, you are sensible you have no eye.—Close that book, let others weep ;

weep ; you have no heart. “ Sir, it is the taste to admire music, painting, and fine writing.”—I am very glad of it.—But it is not *your* taste, here

—————hinc Vos,

Vos hinc, mutatis discedite partibus —

Now confess honestly Mr. Sportsman, that you have more pleasure in Snyder’s pictures, than from hunting in propriâ personâ—that the French horns at a concert have more harmony than in a wood. And, Mr. Connoisseur, you are now in your element.—Is it not better to “ join the jovial chace” than the insipid crew of the dilettanti ?

Let us remember and practice the old maxim.

—————trahit *sua* quemque Voluptas.

L E T T E R

## L E T T E R. V.

Dear Sir,

**I** Am glad you go on with your painting. Though you should never arrive at any great degree of excellence yourself, it will infallibly make you a better judge of the excellencies of others. You tell me, what indeed every Connoisseur says by rote, that the great painters painted above, beyond nature! That they painted beyond nature I grant, but not above, if by above we are to understand something  
more

more excellent than what we find in nature. I have long been sick of the cant of writers and talkers upon this subject. If it be possible, let us speak a little common-sense—endeavour to shew what seems by our feelings to be the truth, and then prevent a wrong application of it.

The great painters, it is agreed, painted beyond nature—but how? Why, if I may venture to say it, by drawing and colouring extravagantly. But were they right or wrong in doing so? This depends upon circumstances. I remember seeing at a Painter's a head taken from nature, another copied from Hans Holbein, and a third from Giulio Romano—upon which

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the

the artist made a dissertation.—He first produced the portrait from nature, and asked me how I liked it? I told him that there appeared to me great simplicity and elegance in it, and an excellence which I thought essential to a good picture—a proper ballance between the light and shade of every part. (I meant that the shade of the white was lighter than that of blue—of blue fainter than of black, &c. so that each colour was as perceivable in the shadows as lights.) Ay, says he, that is true, but I will shew you a style preferable to it—Upon which he produced the copy from Holbein.—I agreed, that it was stronger, and such as nature might appear in many instances.—But  
here,



here, says he, is something *beyond* nature; this I call the sublime style of painting, and this I will try to bring my heads to.—Then he discovered the copy from Giulio—there is strength, says he—see how faint the others are.—Now, acknowledge that the picture I painted from nature is nothing to it. It must be confessed, I replied, that the extravagance of the last picture does for a moment dazzle our eyes—yours seems weak by the comparison, it is like looking upon white paper after staring at the sun.—On the contrary, if I pass from yours to this, I am hurt at seeing every thing so extravagant, and so far *beyond the modesty of nature!*——  
 “It is not intended to be strictly

natural, it is the *fine ideal*, it is something above, beyond nature!"

"I must own that I have no idea of any beauty beyond what may be found in nature—indeed, whence is the idea to be taken? But do not think I rate Giulio or any of the sublime painters lightly; I am so sensible of their merit, that, contrary perhaps to your expectation, I am about to defend their practice. They generally painted for churches, where the picture is seen in a bad light, or at a distance; so that it could not be seen at all if the manner was not violent: both the drawing and colouring must be extravagant to strike—for which reason, they overcharged their attitudes, blackened their shadows, reddened

reddened their carnations, and whitened their lights; and all this with the greatest propriety. But if you apply this practice to closet or portrait painting, what is an excellence in them, becomes a defect in you. This picture which you have copied with so much success, I dare say has an admirable effect where it hangs; but near the eye or in a strong light, it is hard and over-done. On the other hand, if your portrait was to be hung at a great distance, or in an obscure place, the delicate touches I now admire would escape the sight. The style proper for the church is improper for the closet, and the contrary. The great painters were in the right then, in painting *beyond*

*nature*; but let us not imagine that such figures and characters are therefore the most beautiful. No painter can invent a figure surpassing the *finest* of nature: for character and form, nature is the *just* and *only* standard. He shews his genius more by properly associating natural objects, and expressing natural characters, than by exaggerating them or by inventing new ones."

When I receive the picture you have promised me, I will criticise it with as much sincerity as

I am your Friend, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R VI.

**Y**OU have turned my thoughts much towards painting of late—I have been trying to solve this question.

What is the reason that those objects which displease us, or at best, that pass unnoticed, in nature, please us most in painting?

A deep road, a puddle of water, a bank covered with docks and briars, and an old tree or two, are all the circumstances in many a fine landscape. As clowns and half starved cattle are the figures a land-

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scape-

scape-painter chuses for his pictures; so, rough-looking fellows wrapt up in sheets and blankets, are chosen by the history-painter, to express the greatest personages, and in the most dignified actions of their lives.

Let the following observations have what weight they may—tho' they do not clearly answer, they seem to throw some light on this difficult question.

1. While we are uncultivated, like the Irish Oscar, if we are to be awakened, it must be by having a great stone thrown against our heads. The man of the utmost elegance and refinement may remember the time when, in reading, nothing moved him but the marvellous,

vellous, and in painting, nothing pleased him but the glaring. While he was in this state, he delighted in books of chivalry and Chinese pictures—these gave place to less extravagant representations of life; and at last by much converse with men of taste, reading purer authors, and seeing better pictures, he is taught how to feel, and finds a perfect revolution even in his sensations. Those objects which once delighted him, he now despises—these, on the contrary, he formerly took no notice of, he now sees with rapture; and even goes so far as to admire the objects in nature, *he has learnt* to like in representation.—Now, it is this improved, tho' artificial state of  
the

the mind that constitutes the judge of painting—and it is the judge the painter is solicitous to please.—He is to attain this end then, by departing as much as possible from what is our natural barbarous taste, and by conforming to that we have acquired.

2. It is most certain that in all the arts we make difficulties in order to shew our skill in conquering them.—Some French writer calls this principle *la difficulté vaincue*; and this conquest is the source of much pleasure. What is it but this that induces the novellist and play-writer to embarrass their characters with difficulties and troubles? What is there but this that can make a musical canon to be  
thought



thought fine in composition, or extravagant execution in performance agreeable, when the mind cannot comprehend the one, nor the ear follow the other? and, to bring it to the present subject—what is it but this that induces the painter to make use of the most unpromising objects, and produce beauty where you might expect nothing but deformity?

3. It is necessary that a painter should chuse such objects as are capable of variety either from shape or arrangement. Regular formal objects admit but little, especially those where art has the greatest share in their production, unless they are capable of motion, as ships, windmills, &c. and then  
they

they become picturesque by a proper choice of attitude. It is curious to observe the shifts to which artists are reduced, when they are obliged to paint such objects as are in themselves unpicturesque—suppose a fine house with avenues of trees. They will vary the tint of the stones in the one, and of the leaves in the other, or by throwing in accidental shades and lights produce a variety. In like manner, portrait-painters undress the hair, loosen the coat, and wrinkle the stockings that they may produce a variety in the *manner* of *treating* a subject which wanted it in form.

Those objects which have no set form have of course most variety.

A

A road or river may wind in any direction—trees are of all sizes and shapes, may stand here or there—loose drapery admits of a thousand folds and dispositions which the stiff modern dress is incapable of. So that the painter by taking these has ample materials for shewing his judgment in form, or skill in arrangement—for making, and overcoming difficulties—and lastly, by the uniting both these he conforms to the principles by which the cultivated taste is pleased—the ultimate end of all the fine arts.

If you are not satisfied with this solution, help me to a better—but give a fair reading to this of

Your sincere friend, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R VII.

**I** Do not admit your excuse.—A genius should never comply with *local* or *temporary* taste—instead of debasing himself to the people, he should elevate the people to him: When Milton subtilizes divinity, and Shakespear “cracks the wind of a poor phrase;” who but wishes that those great poets had not descended from their sphere?

Your allusions to incidents which must soon be forgot, are only worthy of a writer who expects but a short existence. It is true our  
 plays

plays abound with such allusions. When Foigard, in the *Beaux Stragem*, says he is a subject of the King of Spain—they ask him in a fury “which King of Spain?” This did very well at the time; but these two Kings of Spain are now of much less consequence than their brother monarchs of *Brentford*. I think it is in the same play where one of the characters is asked “when he was at church last?” he should answer “at the coronation;” but it is a point to give a reply that shall suit the time when the play is performed, forgetting that there are many expressions which remove you back into the last century when the play was written. I remember in the  
late

late King's reign the reply used to be "at the installation;" at the accession of his present Majesty an actor thought he had a good opportunity of returning to "coronation," but unluckily it was before the King was crowned.

Allusions of this sort soon become obscure, and yet they will not bear being altered. "Pray you avoid them."

Adieu, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R    VIII.

**T**RUE, my friend, musicians do commit strange absurdities by way of expression—but fanciful people make them commit others which they never thought of.

The most common mistake of composers is to express words and not ideas. This is generally the case with Purcel, and frequently with Handel. I believe there is not a single piece existing of the former, if it has a word, to be played upon, but will prove my assertion: and the latter, if the

E            impetuosity

impetuosity of the musical subject will give him leave, will at any time quit it for a pun. There is no trap so likely to catch composers as the words *high* and *low*, *down* and *up*. “By G— (as Quin says) they must bite.” In what raptures was Purcel when he set “They that *go down* to the sea in ships.” How lucky a circumstance, that there was a singer at that time, who could *go down* to DD, and *go up* two Octaves above? for there is in other parts of the anthem a going *up* as well as *down*. The whole is a constellation of beauties of this kind. Handel had leisure, at the conclusion of an excellent movement, to endeavour at an imitation of the rocking of a cradle

(See



(See the end of the anthem “ My heart is inditing”), and has his *ups* and *downs* too in plenty. If many examples of this may be found in these great geniuses, it would be endless to enumerate the instances in those of the lower order. Let it suffice to observe, that all operas without exception, the greatest part of church-music, and particularly Marcello’s psalms, abound in this ridiculous imitative expression.

This is trifling with the words and neglecting the sentiment ; but the fault is much increased when a word is expressed in contradiction to the sentiment. A most flagrant instance of this is in Boyce’s Solomon, in the song of “ Arise my

Fair One come away.”—The hero of the piece is inviting his mistress to come to him, and to tempt her the more, in describing the beauty of the spring, he tells her that

“ Stern winter’s *gone* with all its train

“ Of chilling frosts and dropping rain,”

but it is *come* in the music—the unlucky words of *winter*, *frost*, and *rain*, made the composer set the lover a shivering, when he was full of the feelings of the “genial ray!”

But sometimes expression of the sentiment is blameable, if such expression is improper for the general subject of the piece. Religious solemnity should not appear at the theatre, nor theatrical levity at the church. In the *Stabat Mater* of

of Pergolesi, and in the *Messiah* of Handel, there is an expression of whipping attempted, which, if it is understood at all, conveys either a ludicrous or prophane idea, according to the disposition of the hearer. Permit me to suspend my subject a moment just to observe, that there is sometimes mention made in plays, of providence, God, and other subjects, which are as incompatible with a place of public entertainment, as the common sentiments of plays are with the church. If we are disgusted at a theatrical preacher, we are not less offended when an actor heightens all these ill-placed sentiments—forcing them upon your notice by an affectation of a deep sense of religion,

ligion, and most solemnly preaching the sermon which the poet so improperly wrote.

All these, and many more, are faults which musicians *really* commit; but a connoisseur will make them guilty of others, by way of compliment, which the composers never dreamt of. The introduction of the Coronation anthem, *Zadok the Priest*, is an arpeggio, which Handel probably took from his own performance at the harpsichord; but a great judge says, it is to express the murmurs of the people assembled in the abbey. “All we like sheep are gone astray” in the Messiah is considered as most excellently expressing the breaking out of sheep from a field.—

But

But out of pity to the connoisseurs, virtuosi, and the most respectable *Conoscenti*, I will not increase my instances—God forbid I should rob any man of his criticism!

Left I should encroach upon *your* premises, I will quit such dangerous ground, and leave you with more celerity than ceremony.

LETTER

## L E T T E R IX.

**I** Like every part of your poem except the parenthesis towards the conclusion. In the midst of a rapid description, or tender sentiment; or any thing that commands the attention, or attaches the heart; what is more disgusting than to have the image cut in two, for the sake of explaining a word, or removing an objection, which the reader may possibly make?

Milton and Shakespeare frequently interrupt the most lively  
and

and ardent passages—take some instances as they occur.

Their arms away they threw, and to the hills  
(For earth hath this variety from heav'n  
Of pleasure situate in hill or dale)  
Light as the lightning's glimpse they ran,  
they flew.

PAR. LOST. B. VI.

—————when on a day  
(For time, though in eternity, apply'd  
To motion, measures all things durable  
By present, past, and future) on such a day  
As heaven's great year brings forth.

PAR. LOST. B. V.

————— evening now approach'd  
(For we have also our evening and our morn,  
We ours for change delectable, not need)  
Forthwith from dance to sweet repast they turn  
Desirous; &c.

Upon the mention of *hills* in  
the first quotation, and of *day* and  
*evening* in the second and last—he  
knew

knew that he had some objections to answer, and accordingly set about doing it for fear of the consequences—I wish they had remained in their full force.

You have often read the *Midsummer Night's Dream*—do you recollect this passage?

*Lys.* *Hermia*, for ought that ever I could read,

Could ever hear by tale or history,  
The course of true love never did run smooth;  
But, either it was different in blood ———

*Her.* O cross! too high, to be enthralld  
to low! ———

*Lys.* Or else misgrated in respect of  
years—

*Her.* O spite! too old, to be engag'd to  
young!

*Lys.* Or else it stood upon the choice of  
friends—

*Her.* O hell! to chuse love by another's  
eye!

*Lys.*



*Lys.* Or if there were a sympathy in choice—

War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it.

Read it without *Hermia's* interruptions and it becomes one of the finest parts of the author—but it is miserably mangled as it stands.

You will remember that it is the improper use of the parenthesis I object to and not to the thing itself. “This figure of composition,” says a late ingenious author, which is hardly ever used in common discourse, is much employed by the best writers of antiquity, in order to give a cast and colour to their style different from common idiom, and by *Demosthenes* particularly; and not only by the orators, but the poets.”

I would

I would recommend to your consideration whether you had not better avoid giving any hint how the story of your poem is to conclude? Anticipation frequently spoils a fine incident. When Æneas is reciting to Dido what past at Troy, says he,

Arduus armatos mediis in mænibus astans  
Fundit equus.

ÆN. II.

The first mention of the Horse's having armed men within, should have been reserved for this place. There is something truly terrible and sublime in Æneas's being waked by such a variety of horrid sounds, and ignorant of the cause; the reader also should have been ignorant until Pantheus explained the

the mystery. See the whole passage in *Æn.* II. beginning at the 298th verse, and if possible, forget that this went before.

*Delecta virum fortiti corpora furtim  
Includunt cæco lateri, &c.*

One of the finest parts of *Don Quixote* is also spoiled by mentioning a circumstance which should have been delayed. The Knight and his 'Squire, at the close of the day, hear the clank of chains, and dreadful blows, which would have puzzled the reader as much as it frightened them, had not the author unluckily said "that the strokes were in *time* and *measure*," which is telling us very plainly that it was a mill. The whole scene is highly picturesque and beautiful.

If

If these hints will be of any service to you it will be a great pleasure to

Yours, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R X.

THE productions of genius require some ages to be brought to perfection. The liberal arts have their infancy, youth and manhood ; and, to carry on the allusion, continue sometime in a state of strength, and then verge by degrees to a decline, which at last ends in a total extinction. The English language, poetry, and music, exhibit proofs of this observation, as far as they have as yet gone : with the two former I have at present nothing to do, but  
shall

I shall confine what I have to say on this subject to the latter.

What the music of the times preceding Harry the eighth was, I confess myself ignorant, nor indeed is the knowledge of it necessary: we may conclude that it was more barbarous than that of the sixteenth century, as the times in which it was used were less enlightened. Some masses, motets, and madrigals are what have reached us. The whole consists of a succession of chords without art or meaning, and perfectly destitute of air. In Elizabeth's reign appeared some composers, Tallis, Bird, Morley, and Farrant, which improved the barren style of their predecessors: they had more choice  
in

in their harmony, and made some little advances in melody. There are some pieces of instrumental music composed at this time which still exist: particularly a book of lessons, for the virginals, which was the Queen's.—Whether the composers thought that her sacred Majesty excelled in musical abilities as much as in rank, or as she wished to do in beauty, I know not; but this is certain, that these pieces are so crowded with parts, and so awkwardly barbarous, as to render the performance of them impossible—so natural is it, even in the infancy of art, to mistake difficulty for beauty.

I do not recollect any composer that really improved music for the

F

first

first half of the seventeenth century, except Orlando Gibbons; of whom, a service for the church; and two or three anthems remain, the harmony of which is good, and the melody pleasing. In the Gloria Patri of the Nunc Dimittis is the best canon, in my judgment, that was ever made. Gibbons was also a composer for the virginals, but in no respect better than his predecessors. I believe it was about this time that the species of canon called the catch, was produced. The intent of my making this short recapitulation of the former state of music is purely prefatory to what I have to say upon the subject of catches.

This



This odd species of composition, whenever invented, was brought to its perfection by Purcel. Real music was as yet in its childhood; but the reign of Charles the second carried every kind of vulgar debauchery to its height. The proper æra for the birth of such pieces as “when quartered, have ever three parts obscenity, and one part music.”

The definition of a catch is a piece for three or more voices, one of which leads, and the others follow in the same notes. It must be so contrived, that rests (which are made for that purpose) in the music of one line be filled up with a word or two from another line; these form a cross-purpose or catch,

F 2

from

from whence the name. Now, this piece of wit is not judged perfect, if the result be not the rankest indecency.

Perhaps this definition may be objected to, and I may be told that there are catches perfectly harmless. It is true that some pieces are called catches that have nothing to offend, and others that may justly pretend to please; but they want what is absolutely necessary for a catch—the break, and cross-purpose.

It may also be said that the result of the break, is not always indecency. I confess there are catches upon other subjects, drunkenness is a favourite one; which, though good, is not so *very* good  
as

as the other : and there may possibly be found one or two upon other topicks which might be heard without disgust ; but these are not sufficient to contradict a general rule, or make me retract what I have advanced.

I will next examine their musical merit.—And this as compositions must consist either in their harmony, or melody ; or their effect in performance.

The harmony of a catch is nothing more than the common result of filling up a chord.—There is not contrivance enough to make it esteemed as a piece of ingenuity. “ What ! they are all canons ! ” So is every tune in the world, if you will set it in three or more

F 3

parts,

parts, and sing those parts in succession as a catch—but a *real* canon is not so easily produced: it is one of those difficult trifles which costs an infinite deal of labour, and after all is worth nothing. I do not except the famous *Non nobis* of Bird, in which are some passages not to be endured. The excellence in the composition of a catch consists in making the breaks, and filling them up properly. The melody is, for the most part, the unimproved vulgar drawl of the times of ignorance.

Let us next attend to the manner of performance. One voice leads, a second follows, and a third, &c. succeeds, unaccompanied with any instrument to keep them in  
tune

·tune together. The consequence is, that the voices are always sinking, but not equally, for the best singer will keep nearest the pitch, and the others depart farthest from it. If the parts are doubled, which is sometimes the case, all these defects are multiplied. To this let there be added the imperfect scale of an uncultivated voice, the *departing* from the real sound by way of humour, the noise of so many people striving to outsing each other, the confusion of speaking different words at the same time, and all this heightened by the laughing and other accompaniments of the audience—it presents such a scene of savage folly as would not disgrace the Hottentots

indeed, but is not much to the credit of a company of civilized people.

As the catch in a manner owed its existence to a drunken club, of which some musicians were members; upon their dying, it languished for years, and was scarce known except among choir-men, who now and then kept up the spirit of their forefathers. As the age grew more polished, a better style of music appeared. Corelli gave a new turn to instrumental music, and was successfully followed by Geminiani and Handel; the last excelled in vocal as well as instrumental music.

There have been refinements and confessed improvements upon all these great men since; and no doubt.

doubt but at this time there are much better performers, and more elegant, tho' less solid composers. This is the united effect of the labours of the whole together, for there is no *one man* to be compared with either of the above-mentioned.

Now, if this were speculation only, is it credible that taste should revert to barbarism? Its natural death is, to be frittered away in false refinement; and yet, contrary to experience in every other instance, we have gone back a century, and catches flourish in the reign of George the third. There is a club composed of some of the first people in the kingdom which meet professedly to hear this species  
of

of composition: they cultivate it and encourage it with premiums. To obtain which, many composers, who ought to be above such nonsense, become candidates, and produce such things

———“ one knows not what to call,  
“ Their generation’s so equivocal.”

Sometimes a piece makes its appearance that was lately found by accident after a concealment of a hundred and fifty years. When it is approved, and declared too excellent for these degenerate days, the author smiles and owns it. I scarce ever saw one of these things that did not betray itself, within three bars, to be modern. It is as difficult to imitate ancient music as ancient poetry; a few square  
notes



notes are not sufficient for the one, nor will two or three *whiloms* and *ekes* do for the other. And yet in this last instance a few affected antiquated spellings have been thought by one half of the world; sufficient to weigh against modern phraseology, modern manners, and even modern facts. Surely it requires no great discernment to discover that what has existed may be imitated, but nothing less than the gift of Prescience can dive into futurity. If it is *improbable* that an uneducated boy should be able to produce what are called Rowley's Poems, it is *impossible* that Rowley could write in a style and allude to facts of after times. Forgive me this digression, but  
indeed

indeed I have nearly finished my subject and letter.

I profess that I never heard a catch sung, but I felt more ashamed than I can express. I pretend to no more delicacy than that of the age I live in, which is very properly too refined to endure such barbarisms—I was ashamed for myself—for my company—and if a foreigner was present—for my country.

It has just occurred to me that you like catches, and frequently help to sing them—revenge yourself for the liberties I have taken, by compelling me to hear some of these pleasant ditties, when perhaps I may be forced to sing in my own defence.

Adieu.

P. S.

P. S. If you should have a design to convert me—take me to the catch-club.—I confess, and honour, the superior excellence of its performance, while I lament that so noble a subscription should be lavished for so poor a purpose as keeping alive musical false-wit, when it might so powerfully support and encourage the best style of composition; and rather advance our taste by anticipating the improvements of the coming age, than force it back to times of barbarism, from which it has cost us such pains to emerge.

LETTER

## L E T T E R    XI.

**I** Know that you are one of those who consider our language as past its meridian. Some think it was in its highest lustre in the age of Sidney; others, in that of Addison. Perhaps, upon an impartial review of it, we shall find it more perfect now than ever.

In the authors before the reign of Elizabeth, there seems not the least pretence to a simple, natural style. A man was held unfit to write, who could not express his thoughts out of the common language;

language ; so that it is possible, there was as much difficulty in understanding them at the time they lived, as now. If we are to judge of the English they spoke, by that they writ, we have no reason to complain of the fluctuation of our tongue. But it is very probable that conversation-language was much the same two hundred years ago as at present ; there are proofs of this in private letters still existing—I mean from such people as had no ambition to be thought learned, or from such as felt too much for affectation. The famous letter of Ann Boleyn to Henry the eighth, is of this last sort, in which there is scarce an obsolete expression.—I hope you make a distinction

distinction between expression and spelling—for as I once observed to you, it is but of late that our orthography has been fixed. In the State-tryals in Elizabeth and James's reign, we find near the same language we use at present, and this was taken immediately from the mouth. In those passages where Shakespeare's genius had not its full scope, may be observed his attempts to be thought learned, and refined; but where the subject was too impetuous to brook restraint, the language is as perfect as the idea. Upon the whole, tho' the colloquial English was much the same as at present, we may safely pronounce the style of the *authors* of this period to be barbarous.

The

The disputes between Charles the first and the Parliament, were of great use in polishing the language; and tho' the King's papers are thought to be most elegant, yet it is evident that both parties endeavoured at strength for the good of their cause, and at perspicuity for the sake of being universally understood—and these two principles go near towards making a perfect style. Milton's prose is in general very nervous, but it is not free from stiffness and affectation.

The other period is that of Addison. He was undoubtedly one of our smoothest and best writers: he had the skill of uniting ease, strength, and correctness, and did

G

more

more towards improving the language than the united labours of fifty years before him. But yet there were some little remains of barbarism still left, which are evident enough in his contemporaries, and may be discovered even in him, by attending to the style and not to the matter. Will you believe that so elegant a writer has used *authenticness* for *authenticity*?—You may find this horrid word in his Dialogues on Medals.

Political disputes have produced, among many bad effects, the same good, now, as formerly—they have improved our language. Those in the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole, but more particularly these in our own times, have occasioned



caſioned ſome of the moſt perfect pieces of writing we have in our tongue. Though, from the nature of the ſubject, the pieces themſelves can ſcarce exiſt longer than the diſpute which gave them being; yet certainly their effect upon the language will be felt when the quarrel itſelf is no more, and every thing relating to it forgotten.

Tho' I have affirmed that our language is more perfect now than in any paſt period—yet there is ſtill much left in it to be corrected.—Indeed there are ſome defects in all languages, which have crept in by degrees, and are ſo ſanctified by cuſtom, that they can never be corrected. In Engliſh there is no difference in writing, tho' there is

in pronouncing, the present, and preterperfect tenses of the verbs *read*, and *eat*, and some others. Some unsuccessful attempts have been made to distinguish them by writing *redde* and *ate*. There are more words in Latin of contrary significations which are written the same, than, I believe, in any other language. It is a *defect* if the pronunciation of different words be alike, and a great *fault* if such a pronunciation be the consequence of a refinement. We now pronounce *fore* and *four*, the same; which sometimes makes an odd confusion. “I will come to you at three, I can’t come *before*”—and “I will come to you at three, I can’t come *by four*”—are pronounced

nounced just the same way. This we get by affectedly dropping the *u*. In French *au deffous* and *au deffus* are too much alike for contrary significations. Nature dictates a difference of sound for different meanings: the adverbs of negation and assent, bear no resemblance to each other in any language; and almost all languages agree in some such sound as *no* for denial.

The London dialect is the cause of many improprieties, which, if they were only used in conversation, would not much signify; but as they have begun to make part of our written language, they deserve some animadversion. To mention a few. The custom a-

mong the common people of adding an *s* to many words, has, I believe, occasioned its being fixed to some, by writers of rank, who on account of their residence in London did not perceive the impropriety. They speak, and write, *chickens* — *coals* — *acquaintances* — *assurances*, &c. *Chicken* is itself the plural of *chick*, as *oxen* is of *ox*, *kine* (*cowen*) is of *cow*, and many others. *Coal*, *acquaintance*, being aggregate nouns, admit of no plural termination, nor does *assistance*. If I were to say a bag of shots, or sands, the impropriety would be instantly perceived; and yet one is full as good English as the other. A certain author of great credit, who has taken a strict, nay, a verbal

bal review of the English language, uses them as often as they occur.

As the Londoners speak, so they also write *learn* for *teach*, this is a very old mistake, and occurs frequently in the psalms, *do* for *does* (and the contrary), *set* for *sit*, *see* for *saw*, *tin* for *latten* (which are two different things as well as words), *sulky* for *sullen*, &c. &c. 'Change and 'sample have been long admitted denizens.—Even in a dictionary you may find *million* explained to be a fruit well known—as perhaps in a future edition we shall be told that a *fly* signifies a *coach*, and *dilly* a *chaise*.

The London *phraseology* has also been too hard for English. *I got me up—he sets him down—I got no*  
G 4
*sleep*

*sleep—I slept none*—such a thing is *a doing—a going—a coming—live lobsters—live cattle—I will call of you—do not tell on it.* All these are writ without scruple. Our modern comedies, and the London news-papers, abound so much in this language, that they are scarce intelligible to one who has never been in the capital. Nay in books for the use of schools, the London dialect is so predominant, that many of the sentences are not to be understood by a country boy, and impossible to be rendered into Latin even by those who do understand them. “I will go and fetch a walk in the Green Park”—“I will go get me my dinner,” and such jargon is perpetually occurring.

English

English has also been corrupted by London *emphasis* and *accent*—I will not tire you by quoting examples, of which a long list might be made to prove the great propensity of the common people to those defects; and would be a farther confirmation of what I just now advanced, that men of learning really commit improprieties, because their ear is familiarized to them.

I have yet something to add on this subject—but I must caution you from imagining that because I find out the faults of others, I pretend to perfection myself. Hogarth says very properly in his *Analyfis of Beauty*, “do not look  
for

for good drawing in those examples which I bring of grace and beauty—they are purposely neglected—attend to the precept.”

LETTER



## L E T T E R XII.

**I** Sometimes provoke you by sporting with what you deem sacred matters. Homer I know is one of your divinities—may I venture to tell you that I never could find that scale of heroes in the Iliad which critics admire as such a beauty?

Hector is supposed in valour superior to all but Achilles—upon what authority? Ajax certainly beat him in the single combat between them; and there are some instances,

instances, tho' I cannot recollect the passages, of his inferiority to others of the Greeks.

It is surely a blindness worse than Homerican, not to see many inconsistencies in the Iliad, and it is ridiculous to attempt to make beauties of them. From many which might easily be pointed out, take one or two as they occur to my memory. After describing Mars as the most terrible of beings, and to whom whole armies are as nothing; what *poetical* belief is strong enough to suppose he could be made to retire by Diomed? If Minerva's shield is so vast (the shell of a Kraken, I suppose), can one help wondering why she does not use it as the King of Laputa  
does

does his island, when his subjects  
on Terra-firma rebel? I do not  
recollect parallel instances in Mil-  
ton.

\* \* \* \* \*

LETTER

## L E T T E R XIII.

YOU have not done me justice —read the memoirs I sent you *properly* before they are condemned: —what is any book if it be not read in that manner by which it may best be understood? A novel, whose merit lies chiefly in the story, should be quickly passed through; for the closer you can bring the several circumstances together, the better. If its merit consists in character and sentiment, it should be read much slower; for the least obvious

obvious parts of a character are frequently the most beautiful, and the propriety of a sentiment may easily escape in a hasty perusal. Detached thoughts ought to be dwelt on longer than any other manner of writing; for different subjects following close, do rather confound than instruct; but if we allowed ourselves time to reflect, we should understand the author and perhaps improve ourselves. Each thought should be considered as a text, upon which we ought to make a commentary.

Bayle's manner of writing by text and note is generally decried, but without reason. When there is a necessity of proving the assertion by quotation, which was his case,

case, no other way can be taken equally perspicuous. The authorities must be produced somewhere—they cannot be in the text, and if they are put at the end of the book, which is the modern fashion, how much more troublesome are they for referring to, than by being at the bottom of the page? The truth is, this is another instance of ignorance in the method of reading. Bayle, Harris, and other writers of this class, should have the text read first, which is quickly dispatched; then, begin again and take in the notes. By ~~this~~ means you *th.* preserve a connection, and judge of the proofs of what is asserted.

I might in other respects complain of your treating me rather unfairly;

unfairly ; indeed, none judge less favourably of an author than his intimate friends ——their personal knowledge of him as a man, destroys a hundred delusions to his advantage as an author.—“Who is a hero to his Valet de Chambre?” said the great Condé, and he might have added, “or to his friends?” Besides the obvious reason for this, it is most likely that an author has in his common conversation made his friends acquainted with his sentiments long before they are communicated to the public. The consequence is, that to *them* his work is not new ; and it is possible that they may take to themselves part of his merit ; for I have known many instances, where

a person has been told something by way of information, which he himself told to the informer.

I know you will take this to yourself.—Do so, but still think me

Yours, &c.



## L E T T E R   XIV.

\*   \*   \*   \*   \*   \*

WE are got into a custom of mentioning Shakspeare and Jonson together, and many think them of equal merit, tho' in different ways. In my opinion, Jonson is one of the dullest writers I ever read, and his plays, with some few exceptions, the most unentertaining I ever saw. He has some shining passages now and then, but not enough to make up for his deficiencies. Shakspeare,

on the contrary, abundantly recompenses for being sometimes low and trifling. One of his commentators much admires his great art in the construction of his verses—I dare say they are very perfect; but it is as much out of my power to think upon the art of verse-making when I am reading this divine poet, as it is to consider of the best way of making fiddle-strings at a concert. I am not master of myself sufficiently to do any thing that requires deliberation: I am taken up like a leaf in a whirlwind, and dropped at Thebes or Athens, as the poet pleases!

I have seldom any pleasure from the representation of Shakspeare's plays, unless it be from some scenes  
of

of conversation merely, without passion. The speeches which have any thing violent in the expression, are generally so over-acted as to cease to be the “mirror of nature”—but this was always the case—“Oh ! it offends me to the soul, to see a robustious perriwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters:”—’tho’ this is a “lamentable thing,” yet it appears to be without remedy. An actor, in a large theatre, is like a picture hung at a distance, if the touches are delicate, they escape the sight : both must be extravagant to be seen at all, and hence the custom of the ancients to make use of the *Persona* and *Buskin*. Acting has a very different effect in the stage-box

from what it has in the back of the gallery. In the one, every thing appears rough and rude, like a picture of Spagnolet's near the eye; in the other, it is with difficulty that the play can be made out. Perhaps, the best place is the front of the first gallery; as being sufficiently removed to soften these hardneffes, yet near enough to see and hear with advantage. But there is no place can alter the impropriety of rant and turgid declamation, which the performer naturally runs into by endeavouring to be strong enough to be heard—so that, as I observed, the evil seems to be incurable.

\* \* \* \* \*

LETTER

## L E T T E R    XV.

AN acquaintance of ours has corresponded with a writing-master many years, not from any regard to the man, but for the pleasure he takes in seeing fine writing. He preserves his letters carefully, and though he *reads* them to none, (perhaps they are still unread by himself) he *shews* them to all who can relish the excellence of a flourish “long drawn out.”——Our friend’s taste may be ridiculed by those who “hold it a baseness to

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write

write fair," but yet it is certain, that the true form of letters, in writing, is understood no where but in England. I never saw a specimen of a correct hand either written or engraved, from any other country, that was upon a right principle. Perhaps it may be objected, that every nation, prejudiced in favour of their own particular manner, will say the same thing. Let us examine this.

Modern writing-hand had its rise from an endeavour to form the true letters as they are printed, with expedition. The first variation from the original, must be an oblique instead of a perpendicular situation, this naturally arises from the position of the hand—the next,

a joining of the letters; these two necessarily produce a third, an alteration of the form. So that writing hand differs from printing in this, that the former is an arrangement of *connected* characters, the latter of distinct ones. The slit in the pen makes the down-strokes full, and the up-strokes slight, so that the body of the letter is strong, and the joinings weak; as they should be. It is most natural and easy also to hold the pen always in the same position, by which means, the full and hair-strokes are always in their right places. So far seems the necessary consequence of endeavouring to make the letters expeditiously with a pen. This being granted;

granted, the ornamental part comes next to be considered. For this, it is requisite that the letters should be of the same size and distance, that their leaning should be in the same direction, that the joining be as much as possible uniform, and, lastly, that the superadded ornament of flourishing, should be continued in the same position of the pen in which it was first begun, (generally the reverse of the usual way of holding it), and that the forms be distinct, flowing, and graceful.

These appear to me to be the true principles of writing. Examine the Italian and French hands by these rules, (some of the best specimens are the titles of prints, &c.)  
and



and the hand which they use will be found to be unconnected, full of unmeaning twists and curlings generally produced by altering the position of the pen, and upon the whole awkward, stiff, and ungraceful.

As they *now* write, we *did*, about seventy or eighty years since; so that our present beautiful hand is a new one, and by its being used no where but in England, I must conclude it to be an English invention.

Believe me, in my best writing,  
and with my best wishes, ever

Yours, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R XVI.

I Have often reflected with great grief, that there is scarce any remarkable natural object in the sublime style, of which we have a draught, to be depended on. The cataract of Niagara.—The peak of Teneriffe, we know nothing of but that the one is the greatest water-fall, and the other the highest single mountain in the world. It is true, Condamine says, that the Andes far surpass the peak of Teneriffe; more than a third—but,  
it

it should be considered, that the valley of Quito is 1600 fathoms above the sea, and that it is from the foot of the mountain that the eye judges of its height. The peak of Teneriffe rises at once, and has, comparatively, but a small base—so that, in appearance, Teneriffe is the highest of mountains. The cataract of Niagara, indeed, is most excellently *described* by Mr. Kalm; but all descriptions of visible objects come so short of a representation, and <sup>are</sup> ~~is~~ necessarily so imperfect, that if ten different painters were to read Mr. Kalm's account of this amazing fall, and to draw it from his description, we should have as many different draughts as painters. The peak  
of

of Teneriffe has been ascended by many, but described by none, for I cannot call those accounts descriptions, which would suit any other high mountain as well. Some travellers give views of what they apprehend to be curious, but all that we can find from them is, that they cannot possibly be like the object described. There must be some amazing scenes in Norway by Pontoppidan's Descriptions, and in the Alps by Schuchter's, but their draughts cannot bear the least resemblance to what they describe. Nay, those objects which lie in the common road of travellers have just the same fate.—The view of Lombardy from the Alps—the bay of Naples—the appearance of  
Genoa,

Genoa, from the sea, &c. &c. are much talked of, but never drawn: or if drawn, not published. From this general censure I should except a view of Vesuvius taken by a pupil of Vernet's, and two views of the Giant's causeway in Ireland, but above all Gaspar Poussin's drawings from Tivoli. These have something so characteristic, that we may be sure that they give a proper idea of the scenes from whence they were taken. Of the many thousands that are constantly going to the East-Indies, not one has published a drawing of the Cape of Good Hope, nor of Adam's peak in Ceylon, nor fifty other remarkable objects which are seen in  
that

that voyage.—Even the rock of Gibraltar is as yet undrawn. What I mean by a drawing is a *pietoresque* view, not a meer outline for the use of navigators, nor the unmeaning marks of a pencil directed by ignorance. I greatly suspect the so much commended draughts in Anson's voyage to be nothing but outlines filled up at random; and more than suspect, that many designs in a late publication of this sort, are mere inventions at home.

I have been led into this subject by the two admirable descriptions of *Ætna* by Sir W. Hamilton and Brydone — as much as *words* can realize objects, they *are* realized.—

But

But yet, a dozen different views taken by real artists, would have done more in an instant, than any effect within the power of description.

\* \* \* \* \*

## L E T T E R    XVII.

IS there not something very fanciful in the analogy which some people have discovered between the arts? I do not deny the *commune quoddam vinculum*, but would keep the principle within its proper bounds. Poetry and painting, I believe, are only allied to music and to each other; but music, besides having the above-named ladies for sisters, has also astronomy and geometry for brothers, and grammar—for a cousin, at least. I am sure I have left out many of the family,



family, though, if I could enumerate what seems at present the whole, it is odds, but there would be a new relation discovered soon by an adept in this business.—Why should not I find out one or two?—I will try.

Let me see—what is there near me? Oh! a standish—music then shall be like my standish. Any thing else?—Yes—like the grate—or like that shirt now hanging by the fire, which makes so excellent a screen.

“How prove you this in your great wisdom?”

Marry! thus—music bears great analogy to my standish; because there is one bottle for the ink, another for the sand, and the third for wafers—these are evidently the uni-

son, third, and fifth, which make a compleat chord; and those three a compleat standish.—The pen is so evidently the plectrum, that it is insulting you to mention it.

“ But why like the grate?”

Bless me! did you never see a testudo,—a lyre? The bars are the strings, the back is the belly—need I enlarge? What is the fire but the vis musica?—and here, the poker is the plectrum.

“ But how can it possibly be like the shirt?”

Pho! any thing in analogy is possible.—Like my shirt?—Why, the body is the bass, the sleeves are two trebles—the ruffles are shakes and flourishes—the three buttons of the collar are evidently the common

mon chord. — But, a truce with such nonsense. — There are scarce any two things in the world but may be *made* to resemble each other. Permit me to shew the slightness of another received opinion concerning music.

“What passion cannot music raise or quell?” says Dryden, or Pope, I forget which: and the same thought is so often expressed by other poets, and so generally adopted by all authors upon this subject, that it would be a bold attempt to contradict it, were there not an immediate appeal to general feeling, which I hope is superior to all authority. Thus supported then, I ask in my turn — “What passion *can* music raise or quell?” Who ever felt himself af-

I 3
fectcd,

fectcd, otherwise than with pleasure, at those strains which are supposed to inspire grief — rage — joy — or pity? and this, in a degree, equal to the goodness of the composition and performance. The effect of music, in this instance, is just the same as of poetry. We attend—are pleased—delighted—transported—and when the heart can bear no more, “glow, tremble, and weep.” All these are but different degrees of pure *pleasure*. When a poet or musician has produced this last effect, he has attained the utmost in the power of poetry or music. Tears being a general expression of grief, pain, and pity; and music, when in its perfection, producing them, has occasioned the mistake, of its raising  
the

the passions of grief, &c. But tears, in fact, are nothing but the mechanical effect of every strong affection of the heart, and produced by all the passions; even joy and rage. It is this effect, and the pleasurable sensation together, which Ossian (whether ancient or modern I care not) calls the “joy of grief.”—— It is this effect, when produced by some grand image, which Dr. Blair, his Critic, styles the “sublime pathetic.”

I have chosen to illustrate these observations from poetry rather than from music, because it is more generally understood, and easier to quote—but the principle is equal in both the arts. Adieu.

## L E T T E R XVIII.

YOUR pictures came safe—my opinion of them you will in part know from the following observations, which, though made on another occasion, are equally applicable to this.

There is in landscape-painting and novel-writing a fault committed by some of the best artists and authors, which is as yet unnamed, because perhaps unnoticed, permit me to call it *a bad association*.

In

In a landscape, it is not sufficient that all the objects are such as may well be found together.—In a story, it is not enough that the incidents are such as may well happen—it is necessary in both, that all the circumstances should be of the *same family*.

Suppose a landscape had for its subject one of Gaspar Poussin's Views of Tivoli—now, tho' there is nothing more natural than to find mills by running water, yet a mill is not an object that can possibly agree with the other parts of the picture. Suppose in a landscape of Ruysdale there were introduced the ruins of a temple; tho' a temple may be properly placed in a wood near water, yet it does not suit the rustic simplicity

simplicity of the pictures of this artist.—Give the mill to Ruysdale and the temple to Gaspar—all will be right. These two painters were the most perfect in their different styles that ever existed. Both formed themselves upon the study of nature, both were correct, both excellent; and yet so totally different from each other, that there are scarce any parts of the pictures of one, that will bear being introduced into those of the other. Claude's magnificent ideas frequently betrayed him into *a bad association*.——Large grand masses of trees agree but ill with sea and ships, unless they are removed to a distance.—An English painter, who formed himself upon  
the



the study of Gaspar, took his trees, rocks, and other circumstances from that master, but his buildings from the Gardiner's huts at Newington.

A story which proceeds upon a regular circumscribed plan, chiefly consisting of dialogue and sentiment, where the scene is laid in London, and the characters such as are natural to the place; has *a bad association* if the author goes to Africa in quest of adventures. On the other hand, a novel which sets out upon the principle of variety, and where a frequent change of place is necessary to the execution of the design, has *a bad association* if the author in any part of it quits adventure for sentiment or satire.

And

And yet, this has been done by Fielding and Smollet, the two best novel-writers of the age.

\* \* \* \* \*

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.









T H I R T Y  
L E T T E R S

O N

V A R I O U S S U B J E C T S.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. II.

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L O N D O N :

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### SECOND VOLUME.

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LETTERS.

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## L E T T E R S.

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### L E T T E R    XIX.

**T**HERE was never a poet more admired in his life or more despised after his death than Quarles. He was patronized by the best of his age while living, and when dead was first criticized, then contemned, and last of all totally forgotten, unless when some bard wanted a name of one syllable to fill up a list of miserable rhymers. Pope was the last who made this use of him,

and at the same time, in a note, abused Benlowes for being his patron. I think it is Sir Philip Sidney who says that no piece was ever a favourite of the common people without merit. Now, though every thing I had heard of Quarles was much in his disfavour, I could not help thinking but that he had something good in him, from my never seeing one of his books of emblems that was not worn to rags ; a sign of its being read a good deal, unless it may be imagined that it was so used by children in turning over the prints. Be that as it may, I have perused as much of him as a very dirty tattered book would give me leave, and will risque the declaring, that where he is good, I know but few

few poets better. He has a great deal of genuine fire, is frequently happy in similes, admirable in epithets and compound words, very smooth in his versification, so different from the poets of his own age; and possessed that great qualification of keeping you in perpetual alarm, so very different from the elegant writers of the present times.

I have run through his book of emblems to select some passages for your observation—they are buried, it must be confessed, in a heap of rubbish, but are of too much value not to be worth some pains in recovering.—Where Quarles is bad, “he sounds the very base-string of humility”—but this may be said

of Shakspeare and Milton as well. —I mean not to put him in the same rank with these two poets; he has a much greater proportion of bad to good than is to be found in them, so much indeed as almost to prevent his good from appearing at all. My intention is to clear some of his shining passages of their incumbrances; which may occasion their being noticed, and preserved from oblivion.

What think you of the following families?

Look how the stricken hart that wounded flies  
 Oe'r hills and dales, and seeks the lower grounds  
 For running streams, the whilst his weeping eyes  
 Beg silent mercy from the following hounds;  
 At length, embost, he droops, drops down, and lies  
 Beneath the burthen of his bleeding wounds:  
 Ev'n so my gasping soul, dissolv'd in tears, &c.

EME. II. Book IV.

Mark.

Mark how the widow'd turtle, having lost  
 The faithful partner of her loyal heart,  
 Stretches her feeble wings from coast to coast,  
 Hunts ev'ry path ; thinks ev'ry shade doth part  
 Her absent love and her ; at length, unsped,  
 She re-betakes her to her lonely bed,  
 And there bewails her everlasting widow-head.

EMB. 12. BOOK IV.

Look how the sheep, whose rambling steps do stray  
 From the safe blessing of her shepherd's eyes,  
 Eft-soon becomes the unprotected prey  
 To the wing'd squadron of beleag'ring flies ;  
 Where swelt'ed with the scorching beams of day  
 She frisks from bush to brake, and wildly flies away  
 From her own self, ev'n of herself afraid ;  
 She shrouds her troubled brows in ev'ry glade  
 And craves the mercy of the soft removing shade.

EMB. 14. BOOK IV.

The first, will probably remind you of Shakspeare's description of the wounded stag in *As you like it* ; which it may do, and not suffer by the comparifon. The fecond, is very original in the expreffion—the

B 3                      circum-

circumstance of

——— thinks *every shade* doth part

Her absent love and her———

is I believe new, and exquisitely tender. There are others not much inferior to these.

The following verses allude to the print prefixed, where a bubble is represented as heavier than the globe. It is necessary to observe, that the prints were designed first, and the poems are in a great measure explanatory of them.

Lord! what a world is this, which day and night  
Men seek with so much toil, with so much trouble,  
Which weigh'd in equal scales is found so light,  
So poorly overbalanc'd with a bubble?  
Good God! that frantic mortals should destroy  
Their higher hopes, and place their idle joy  
Upon such airy trash, upon so light a toy!

\* \* \* \*

Thrice happy he, whose nobler thoughts despise  
To make an object of so easy gains;

Thrice



Thrice happy he, who scorns so poor a prize  
 Should be the crown of his heroic pains:  
 Thrice happy he, that ne'er was born to try  
 Her frowns or smiles: or being born, did lie  
 In his sad nurse's arms an hour or two, and die.

EMB. 4. BOOK I.

Tho' the considering mortality on the gloomy side, is not productive of much happiness, yet there are certain dispositions which feel some gratification in it—Quarles was one of these. He seizes all opportunities of abusing the world; and it must be confessed he has here done it in “choice and elegant terms.”

Sometimes he is more outrageous in his abuse.

Let wit, and all her studied plots effect  
 The best they can;  
 Let smiling fortune prosper and perfect  
 What wit began;

Let earth advise with both, and so project  
     A happy man;  
 Let wit or fawning fortune vie their best;  
     He may be blest  
 With all that earth can give; but earth  
     Can give no rest.

EMB. 6. Book I.

Again—

False world, thou ly'st: thou canst not lend  
     The least delight:  
 Thy favours cannot gain a friend,  
     They are so slight:  
 Thy morning-pleasures make an end  
     To please at night:  
 Poor are the wants that thou supply'st:  
 And yet thou vaunt'st, and yet thou vy'st  
 With heav'n; fond earth, thou boast'st,  
     False world, thou ly'st.

EMB. 5. Book II.

The next quotation is an allusion  
 to the print, where the world is  
 made a mirror.

Believe her not, her glass diffuses  
 False portraitures —————

Were

Were thy dimensions but a stride,  
 Nay, wert thou statur'd but a span,  
 Such as the long-bill'd troops defy'd,  
 A very fragment of a man !

Had surfeits, or th' ungracious star  
 Conspir'd to make one common place  
 Of all deformities that are  
 Within the volume of thy face,  
 She'd lend the favour shou'd out-move  
 The Troy-bane Helen, or the Queen of Love.

EMB. 6. Book II.

This is finely wrought up—  
 Quarles perfectly comprehended the  
 effect of the musical *crescendo*, which  
 is instanced particularly in the last  
 passage.

There is something very dreadful  
 in the 4th line of this stanza.

See how the latter trumpet's dreadful blast  
 Affrights stout Mars his trembling son !

See

See how he startles ! how he stands aghast,  
 And scrambles from his melting throne !  
 Hark ! how the direful hand of vengeance tears  
 The swelt'ring clouds, whilst Heav'n appears  
 A circle fill'd with flame, and center'd with his fears.

EMB. 9. BOOK II.

Dr. Young has some lines on this subject which are by some much admired.—But tho' the subject be the same, it is differently circumstanced.—Young's is a general description of the last judgment, Quarles describes its effect on a single being who is supposed to have lived fearless of such an event.

—————At the destin'd hour,  
 By the loud trumpet summon'd to the charge,  
 See all the formidable sons of fire,  
 Eruptions, earthquakes, comets, lightnings, play  
 Their various engines ; all at once disgorge  
 Their blazing magazines ; and take by storm  
 This poor terrestrial citadel of man.  
 Amazing period ! when each mountain height  
 Out-burns Vesuvius ! rocks eternal pour

Their

Their melted' mafs, as rivers once they pour'd;  
 Stars rufh, and final *Ruin* fiercely drives  
 Her plough-share o'er creation. ———

Now to me, all this is a “peftilent congregation of vapour.”——The formidable fons of fire fpewing out blazing magazines—and *Ruin* like a plough-man (or rather plough-woman) driving *her* plough-share—are mean, incoherent images. How much more fublimely Quarles expreffes the fame, and indeed fome additional ones, in the laft three lines?

In the print belonging to the emblem from which the following is taken, is a figure ftriking a globe with his knuckles.—The motto, *Tinnit, inane eft.*

She's empty—hark! ſhe founds—there's nothing there  
 But noife to fill thy ear;

Thy

Thy vain enquiry can at length but find  
                     A blast of murmur'ing wind:  
 It is a cask, that seems, as full as fair,  
                     But merely tunn'd with air;  
 Fond youth, go build thy hopes on better grounds:  
                     The soul that vainly sounds  
 Her joys upon this world, but feeds on empty sounds!

EMB. 10. BOOK II.

But that you may not think the good passages of this poet are only scattered unequally through his poems; take some entire ones—or nearly so.

What sullen star rul'd my untimely birth,  
That would not lend my days one hour of mirth?  
How oft' have these bare knees been bent to gain  
The slender aims of one poor smile in vain?  
How often, tir'd with the fastidious light,  
Have my faint lips implor'd the shades of night?  
How often have my nightly torments pray'd  
For ling'ring twilight, glutted with the shade?  
Day worse than night, night worse than day appears,  
In sighs I spend my nights, my days in tears:  
I moan unpity'd, groan without relief,  
There is no end nor measure of my grief.

The

The smiling flow'r salutes the day; it grows  
 Untouch'd with care; it neither spins nor sows:  
 O that my tedious life were like this flow'r,  
 Or freed from grief, or finish'd with an hour:  
 Why was I born? why was I born a man?  
 And why proportion'd by so large a span?  
 Or why suspended by the common lot,  
 And being born to die, why die I not?  
 Ah me! why is my sorrow-wasted breath  
 Deny'd the easy privilege of death?  
 The branded slave, that tugs the weary oar,  
 Obtains the sabbath of a welcome shore.  
 His ransom'd stripes are heal'd; his native soil  
 Sweetens the mem'ry of his foreign toil:  
 But ah! my sorrows are not half so blest;  
 My labour finds no point, my pains no rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

Thou just observer of our flying hours,  
 That with thy adamant fangs, devours  
 The brazen mon'uments of renowned kings,  
 Doth thy glass stand? or be thy moulting wings  
 Unapt to flie? if not, why dost thou spare  
 A willing breast; a breast that stands so fair?  
 A dying breast, that hath but only breath  
 To beg the wound, and strength to crave a death?  
 O that the pleased heav'ns would once dissolve  
 These fleshly fetters, that so fast involve

*MY*

My hamper'd soul; then would my soul be blest  
From all those ills, and wrap her thoughts in rest!

\* \* \* \* \*

EMB. 15. BOOK III.

At other times he complains of  
the shortness of life, and in strains  
equally pathetic.

My glass is half unspent; forbear t'arrest  
My thriftless day too soon: my poor request  
Is that my glass may run but out the rest.

My time-devoured minutes will be done  
Without thy help; see—see how swift they run:  
Cut not my thread before my thread be spun.

The gain's not great I purchase by this stay;  
What loss sustain'st thou by so small delay,  
To whom ten thousand years are but a day?

My following eye can hardly make a shift  
To count my winged hours; they fly so swift,  
They scarce deserve the bounteous name of gift.

The secret wheels of hurrying time do give  
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,  
That I am dead before I seem to live.

And



And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,  
Whose glory in one day doth fill the stage  
With childhood, manhood, and decrepit age.

And what's a life? the flourishing array  
Of the proud summer-meadow, which to-day  
Wears her green plush, and is to-morrow hay.

Read on this dial, how the shades devour  
My short-liv'd winter's day; hour eats up hour;  
Alas! the total's but from eight to four.

Behold these lilies, which thy hands have made  
Fair copies of my life, and open laid  
To view, how soon they droop, how soon they fade!

Shade not that dial, night will blind too soon;  
My non-aged day already points to noon;  
How simple is my suit! how small my boon!

Nor do I beg this slender inch, to while  
The time away, or falsely to beguile  
My thoughts with joy; here's nothing worth a smile.

No, no, 'tis not to please my wanton ears  
With frantic mirth; I beg but hours, not years:  
And what thou giv'st me, I will give to tears!

\* \* \* \* \*

EMB. 13. BOOK III.

“ Read

“ Read on *this* dial”— “ Behold *these* lilies”—does not this put you in mind of the same form of expression in Ossian? “ His spear was like *that* blasted fir.”

Quarles was commenting on his print in which the dial and lilies were represented; Ossian saw his images “ in his mind’s eye”—but both the poets considered them as really existing—at least, they make them exist to their readers.

“ How the shades devour,” &c. Shakspeare has the same figure

————— the tide

*Eats* not the flats with more impetuous haste  
it is wonderfully expressive!

In what he calls his hieroglyphics, Quarles compares man to a taper, which furnishes him with a number

ber of very striking allusions. It is at first unlighted, then a hand from heaven touches it with fire—the motto, *Nescius unde*.

This flame-expecting taper hath at length  
 Received fire, and now begins to burn:  
 It hath no vigour yet, it hath no strength;  
 Apt to be puffed and quenched at every turn:  
 It was a gracious hand that thus endow'd  
 This snuff with flame: but mark, this hand  
 doth shroud  
 Itself from mortal eyes, and folds it in a cloud.

Thus man begins to live. An unknown flame  
 Quickens his finished organs, now possess  
 With motion; and which motion doth proclaim  
 An active soul, though in a feeble breast:  
 But how, and when infus'd, ask not my pen;  
 Here flies a cloud before the eyes of men,  
 I cannot tell thee how, nor canst thou tell me when.

Was it a parcel of celestial fire,  
 Infus'd by heav'n into this fleshly mould?  
 Or was it, think you, made a soul entire?  
 Then, was it new created, or of old?

Or is't a propagated spark, rak'd out  
From nature's embers ? while we go about  
By reason to resolve, the more we raise a doubt.

If it be part of that celestial flame,  
It must be ev'n as pure, as free from spot,  
As that eternal fountain whence it came ;  
If pure and spotless, then whence came the blot ?  
Itself being pure, could not itself defile ;  
Nor hath unactive matter pow'r to soil  
Her pure and active form, as jars corrupt their oil.

Or if it were created, tell me when ?  
If in the first six days, where kept 'till now ?  
Or if thy soul were new-created, then  
Heav'n did not all at first, he had to do :  
Six days expired, all creation ceas'd ;  
All kinds, ev'n from the greatest to the least,  
Were finish'd and compleat before the day of rest.

But why should man, the Lord of creatures, want  
That privilege which plants and beasts obtain ?  
Beasts bring forth beasts, and plant a perfect plant ;  
And ev'ry like brings forth her like again ;  
Shall fowls and fishes, beasts and plants convey  
Life to their issue, and man less than they ?  
Shall these get living souls, and man dead lumps of  
clay ?

Must

Must human souls be generated then? —

My water ebbs ; behold a rock is nigh :  
If nature's work produce the souls of men,  
Man's soul is mortal—all that's born must die.

What shall we then conclude ! what sunshine will  
Disperse this gloomy cloud ? till then, be still  
My vainly striving thoughts ; lie down my puzzled  
quill.

HIEROGLYPH. 2.

The closeness of the reasoning, and the freedom of the verses cannot be enough admired. I believe it would be difficult if not impossible to reason so shortly and yet so clearly in prose. Pope says the thoughts in his *Essay on Man* are in less compass for their being in verse. The poetical language admits of elisions and other varieties we cannot have in prose. This poem is followed by another, before which is a design of the winds blowing the flame of the taper, with this

C 2

motto,

motto, "*The wind passeth over it,  
and it is gone!*"

No sooner is this lighted Taper set  
Upon the transitory stage  
Of eye-bedark'ning night,  
But it is straight subjected to the threat  
Of envious winds, whose wasteful rage  
Disturbs her peaceful light,  
And makes her substance waste, and makes her flame  
less bright.

No sooner are we born, no sooner come  
To take possession of this vast,  
This soul-afflicting earth,  
But danger meets us at the very womb ;  
And sorrow with her full-mouth'd blast  
Salutes our painful birth  
To put out all our joys, and puff out all our mirth.

Nor infant innocence, nor childish tears,  
Nor youthful wit, nor manly pow'r,  
Nor politic old age,  
Nor virgins pleading, nor the widows pray'rs,  
Nor lowly cell, nor lofty tow'r,  
Nor prince, nor peer, nor page,  
Can 'scape this common blast, nor curb her stormy  
rage.

\* \* \* \* \*

Toft

Tost to and fro, our frightened thoughts are driv'n  
 With ev'ry puff, with ev'ry tide  
 Of life-consuming care;  
 Our peaceful flame, that would point up to heav'n  
 Is still disturb'd and turn'd aside;  
 And ev'ry blast of air  
 Commits such waste in man, as man cannot repair.

\* \* \* \* \*

What may this sorrow-shaken life present  
 To the false relish of our taste  
 That's worth the name of sweet?  
 Her minute's pleasure's choak'd with discontent,  
 Her glory soil'd with ev'ry blast—  
 How many dangers meet  
 Poor man betwixt the biggin and the winding sheet!

HIEROGLYPH. 3.

Tho' I have purposely omitted pointing out many of the particular beauties of these poems, I would wish you to observe, in this last, the fine effect of compound words in which this author is so happy: also the noble swell in the third

C 3                      stanza—

stanza—the application of his allegory to its meaning, in the fourth, where the expression so admirably suits with both “our peaceful flame, &c.”——if these are not genuine strokes of genius, I must, as a great critic says on a like occasion, acknowledge my ignorance of such subjects. I wish we had some word in our language to express the same idea in poetry as *crescendo* does in music; swell is applied to so many other purposes, that it has not the effect of an appropriated term.

But for the present I must quit the subject—in a little time expect the remainder of my observations on this poet.

LETTER



## L E T T E R    XX.

EVERY one seems to be satisfied that warm colouring is essential to a good picture: but what *is* warm colouring is not determined. Some have joined the idea of warmth to yellow, others to red, others to the compound of both, the orange—they also differ in the degrees of each. A warm picture to some, is cold to others; and vice versa. Lambert's idea of warmth, was to make his pictures appear as if they were behind a yellow glass. Vanbloom's have a red glass before them.

them. Both's an orange colour. Each has its admirers, who condemn the rest.

Who shall decide when Doctors disagree?

Nature. All these hues are right as *particulars*, but wrong as *universals*.

Let us examine the different appearances of light from the dawn to noon. The first break of day is a cold light in the East—this, by degrees, is tinged with purple, which grows redder and redder until the purple is lost in orange—the orange in yellow, and before the sun is two degrees high, the yellow is changed to white. Invert the order of these, and it is the coming on of the evening. All these hues  
then

then exist in nature, and one is just as right as the other.

It is necessary to distinguish between the painter's *warmth*, and the sensation. A picture, that has most warmth of colouring, represents that time of the day when we feel least. A true representation of noon must have no tinge of yellow or red in the sky; and yet from its being noon, one might be led to imagine it must be *warm*. It is the critic, and not the artist, which confounds the meaning of these terms. In like manner, summer and winter, in respect to light, are just the same: the sun rises and sets as gorgeously in December, if the weather be clear, as in June. I remember seeing two pictures of  
Cuyp,

Cuyp, companions—one, a cattle piece in summer; the other, winter with figures skating. The sky in both was equally *warm*, for which the painter was much censured by an auction-connoisseur, who declared that it was impossible the sky could be *warm* in winter.

I believe it is a common mistake to apply the red and purple tints to the morning, and the orange and yellow to the evening. We hear pictures of Claude called mornings and evenings, which may be either. It is really odd enough, that there should not be a single circumstance to distinguish the morning from the evening, unless it be in a view of a particular place—in this case, the reversing of the light shews the difference.

difference. In a picture, there is no distinction between going to work, or milking, or returning from it—men ride, drive cattle, are fishing, &c. as well early as late.

These considerations should soften the peremptory style of some judges, and extend their taste, which at present seems much confined. We have seen that there are more natural hues than one or two. I will allow them to say, that a picture is too warm, too cold, too red, too yellow to please them, but let them not deny that these hues are all in nature, and that well-managed they are all picturesque.

## L E T T E R    XXI.

AT the revival of the arts, some evil genius, who was determined to retard the progress of painting, dictated this rule. “A picture should always have its horizon the height of the eye *that looks at it*—in nature, the eye being always the height of the horizon; therefore a picture will be most like nature that has its horizon the height of the *natural eye*.” One of the falsest rules that ever was founded on a false principle! and this is the more lamentable, as it has spoiled,  
in

in point of perspective, three parts of the historical pictures that have ever been painted.

As it is very difficult to destroy a rooted error, and as this is a most pernicious one, it is necessary to be full and particular.

When I say *eye* and *horizon*—the natural eye and horizon are meant. When the terms *artificial eye* and *artificial horizon* are used, the eye and the horizon represented in painting are to be understood. We must be clear in this distinction, for it is the confounding of the ideas expressed by these terms which has occasioned the mischief.

The eye, and the horizon, are always of the same height—therefore

The

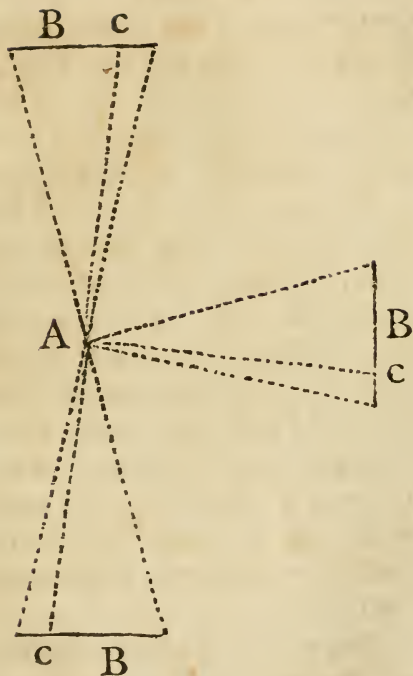
The artificial eye and the artificial horizon must always be so—but

There is no connection between the *real* eye, and the *artificial* horizon.

In every picture the artificial eye, or point of sight, is supposed to be at a certain height from the base-line; as high as a human figure would be, represented as standing there. To this point every thing in the picture tends, as every thing in a real view tends to the natural eye. The picture then, as far as this circumstance is concerned, is perfect, if the *artificial* eye and the *artificial* horizon go together; for these always bear the same relation to each other, let the picture be placed any where.

Let





Let A be the eye, B the picture (in section) and c the horizon of the picture.—The eye is always the  
apex

apex of the cone; there is constantly the same relation between the parts in every position. It must be observed that there is a defect in this illustration which it was impossible to avoid—for tho' I have considered A as the eye, yet *upon paper*, it is *artificial* as well as the picture B. If you cannot make this distinction, I propose the following demonstration. —Take a landscape and stand it upon a table—hang it up the height of the eye—above the height—put it upon a chair—upon the floor—it still, *perspectively considered*, is seen equally well—for

The *real* eye is always the height of the *artificial* eye, whether the picture be fixed in the cieling or laid upon the floor.

Indeed

Indeed if this was not so, how would it be possible to hang one picture over another? and yet this is done, and with the greatest propriety.

I have often lamented the shifts to which painters are reduced, who have followed this rule in opposition to their senses. Lareffe was so thoroughly possessed with it, that his idea of fitting up a room with pictures, was to have those which were below the eye to contain nothing but ground, and those which were above, the sky and clouds. But though he was convinced of the rectitude of his principle, he was struck with the oddity of the practice—he therefore recommended that there should be but one

picture from the floor to the cieling, in which there might be a perfect coincidence of the natural and artificial horizon.

A portrait-painter sets the person he is to draw generally the height of his eye.—Suppose it to be a whole-length with a landscape in the back-ground: the artist considers his picture is to hang above the eye, and for that reason makes his horizon low, about the height of the knees. The consequence is, that there are two points of sight, which supposes an impossibility; for the eye cannot be in two places at the same time. If the eye be supposed on a level with the head of the figure, as it was on drawing the face, then the back-ground is too

too low; if equal to the horizon of the back-ground, then the figure is too high, unless we suppose it on an eminence, or ourselves in a pit; in that case, instead of seeing the face in front, we must have looked under the chin—but as we do not, the figure always appears to be falling forward.

Raffaele's horizon is most commonly the height of his figures, so that they stand properly, and seem to be, whether in a print or a picture, the size of human creatures;—on the contrary, when the horizon is low, the figures always appear gigantic. When I was a boy, I had formed so very exalted an idea of the size of running horses, from seeing them drawn with the

distant hills appearing under their bodies, that the first time I was at a course, it appeared but as a rat-race.

Every whole length picture will furnish you with an instance of this false principle, which would appear more disagreeable, if custom had not in some measure reconciled us to it. I am aware that the practice of so many great men is a strong objection to my argument; but as I conceive, with due submission to such authority, that there is *demonstration* on my side, I cannot easily retract what I have advanced.

LETTER

## L E T T E R XXII.

THE commentators of Shakspeare think themselves obliged to find some meaning in his nonsense; and to come at it, twist and turn his words without mercy: never considering, that in his scenes, as in common life, some part must be necessarily unimportant.

Many a passage has been criticised into consequence. The meaning, to use Shakspeare's words on a like occasion, "is like a grain of wheat hid in a bushel of chaff; you shall seek all day e'er you find it, and

when you have it, it is not worth the search."

An expression of *Shallow's* in the second part of *Henry the fourth* has been the subject of much criticism and hypercriticism. "We will eat a last year's pippin with a dish of carraways;" and it is certain that there was such a dish, but if Shakspeare had meant it, he would have said, "A dish of last year's pippins with carraways"—"*with* a dish, &c." clearly means something distinct from the pippins. Roasted pippins stuck full of carraways, says one—carraway confect, or comfit well known to children, says another—as if every one did not know what carraway comfits were, says a third, laughing at the second. Dine with  
any



any of the *natural* inhabitants of Bath about Christmas, and they probably will give you after dinner a dish of pippins and carraways—which last is the name of an apple as well known in that country as nonpareil is in London, and as generally associated with golden pippins.

“Then am I a fous’d gurnet,” says Falstaff. This fish has puzzled the commentators as much as the apple did before.—What can it be?—I never heard of such a fish.—There is no such fish. A magazine critic, assured of its non-existence, proposed reading *grunt*, gurnet, quasi grunet, quasi grunt——well, and what do we get by that? Why, because hogs grunt, and pork is

the flesh of hogs, *sous'd gurnet* means pickled pork! Very lately a commentator, who once denied its existence, has discovered in consequence of his great learning, that there is *really* such a fish—he is *really* in the right—if he will go to the South coast of Devonshire, he may see plenty of them—but not *sous'd*.

And now I mention Falstaff, let me explain his copper ring. He complains of being robbed when he was asleep, and “losing a seal-ring of his *grandfather's* worth forty marks.” “O Jesu,” says the hostess, “I have heard the prince tell him I know not how oft, that the ring was *copper*.” Is the appearance of copper so much like gold, that one  
may

may be mistaken for the other? Formerly, (about the time of Falstaff's grandfather) gold was a scarce commodity in England, so scarce that they frequently made rings of copper and plated them thinly with gold; I have seen two or three of them. As the look of both was alike, Falstaff might insist upon its being gold; on the contrary, the prince, from the quality of the wearer and lightness of the ring, might with equal fairness maintain that it was only plated.

Though it is not my intention to make one of the number of Shakspeare's commentators, I will take this opportunity of restoring a passage in King Lear. In the  
 agony

agony of his passion with his daughter, he says (in the modern editions)

“ Th’ *untented* woundings of a Father’s  
curse

Pierce every sense about thee.”

In the old editions it is printed exceeding plainly, “ Th’ *untender* woundings, &c.” that is, not tender, or cruel. It would be waste of time to shew its propriety, and that there is no such word as *untented*. Who first threw out the true reading and substituted the false, I know not. Is it worth while to say, that the word is often used by Shakspeare, and once at least besides in the same play, “ so young and so untender ?”

One

One more and I will release you.  
—Shylock says,

Some men there are, love not a gaping pig;  
Some that are mad, if they behold a cat;  
And others, when the bag-pipe sings in the  
nose,

Cannot contain, &c. ——— for *affection*.

that is, because they are so *affected*.  
These poor lines have been new-  
worded, new stopped, and all to  
find the meaning of as plain a pas-  
sage as can be written. “Some  
men cannot abide this thing, others  
have an aversion to another, which  
sometimes produces strange effects  
on their bodies, because their ima-  
gination is so strongly *affected*. Mas-  
terless passion, suffering, or feeling,  
compels them to follow the im-  
pulse.” The not understanding  
*affection*

*affection* and *passion* in Shakspeare's quaint sense has occasioned the difficulty.

There are many other corrupted and misunderstood passages that require as little attention, to set them right, as what has been exerted on this occasion, by

Yours sincerely, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R XXIII.

SCARCE a year passes but our language has some new trick played with it.—But let the sufferers speak for themselves.

*To the People of GREAT-BRITAIN.*

The Petition of *To* and *The*,

*Humbly sheweth,*

THAT your Petitioners have, time out of mind, possessed certain places allowed to be their undoubted right, and that they lately have been, *vi et armis*, thrust from their  
ancient

ancient possessions. Their misfortune being in common, they present their common petition; hoping that the laudable zeal for the reformation of abuses will extend even to them, and that they shall be restored to their pristine use and consequence.

Though your petitioners labour under a common misfortune, yet it is necessary that they separately state their case.—And first *To* for himself says,

That he has for years past had a place in the direction of all letters — that he was first removed from thence, as he apprehends, by some member of parliament, who was too much busied in his country's good to attend to propriety. As  
it



it is the wicked custom of the world to press down a falling man, the said *To* is in a manner totally displaced from his ancient possession: all people, except the very few who prefer grammar to fashion, agreeing to his removal. Were his place filled by a worthy successor he should keep his complaints secret, remembering that he himself succeeded *For*—but to be succeeded by nothing, is reviving the old fanatic principle of the last century, which all who are lovers of the constitution must shudder at! Consider good people, you who so well know the value of property, what quantities of letters are at this instant in the post-office that are neither *To* nor *For* any person? In many instances

stances you condescend to be instructed by your neighbours—is the *A* Monsieur yet left out in the direction of French letters? If you were to address in Latin, would you not use the dative case—and pray what is the sign of the dative but your petitioner

*To?*

Secondly, *The* for himself says,

That he has had, from the first existence of our language, precedence of army, navy, commons, lords, and even government itself;—that he is most basely removed from this his just station—for he appeals to all impartial judges, if such are to be found, what a foolish figure does army, navy, commons, lords,

lords, and government cut without he takes the lead. If this were alone the damage it is surely of great concern, but alas! the evil is spreading! scarce a day passes but he loses some ancient possession of trust and consequence! It is, indeed, insinuated, that your petitioner formerly usurped a station he had by no means a right to, and that his present loss is a just retaliation. What business had *The*, says these meddlers, before *Faustina* and *Cuzzoni*, and so on through all the *inas* and *onis* to the present time? Alas! my good countrymen, consider, these were but possessions of a day! *The* *Faustina* and her successors were but the grasshoppers of a season—from this encroachment he

was soon dispossessed; but navy, army, ministry, are of perpetual duration. Perhaps you will reply that your petitioner is but an article—true—but think of the consequence—if you destroy your particles and articles, and reduce your language by degrees to noun substantives, who knows but the next innovation will be the substituting *things* instead of *words*—you have heard of a country so incumbered. —Consider the expence of carriage.—Think, O ye wits, of having your coaches attended with waggon loads of conversation. Nip the evil in its bud, shew your regard for posterity, and consider the petition of

*The.*

In

In a general wreck it is worth while to save something.—Your Petitioners are contented to be thrust out of parliament—it is confessed that the members of that honourable house should not attend to trifles.—But consider, good people, you are not *all* members of parliament, *you* may restore us to our ancient rights, our just privileges, and legal possessions—which we trust you will do, and your poor Petitioners

Shall ever pray, &c.

## L E T T E R    XXIV.

I Cannot agree with you in the cause of that uncommon production you mention ; my thoughts on this subject, and on some others connected with it, will appear by the following reflections.

Until the last hundred years or thereabout, it was supposed that in many instances life was produced by putrefaction, fermentation, &c. Leuwenhoek and other naturalists, clearly demonstrated that some animals which were supposed to owe their existence to the above causes,  
or

or in other words, to spontaneous generation, really had a regular production. This discovery established the general principle of *omnia ab ovo*—but it must be received with reserve and exception.

After giving every theory of the earth a patient reading, it seems to me probable that the whole world was originally covered with water to the depth of about three miles, which is about as much below the surface, as the highest mountains rise above it. This depth, though far below all soundings, bears no more proportion to the earth's diameter, than that of the paper it is covered with does to a common globe. The idea of the sea approaching the center, and of course,

E 3                      possessing

possessing a superior share in quantity as well as surface of the earth, has occasioned many difficulties in accounting for the balance between the different sides of the globe; which vanish, if the sea is not supposed of a greater depth than necessity requires, or reason and probability warrant.

I consider all continents as a congeries of islands heaved up from the bottom of the sea at different times by vulcanos and earthquakes. Modern philosophers have discovered ancient vulcanos where they were never suspected to have existed, and the whole earth is full of evidence that it was once beneath the ocean. Marble, freestone, and many other substances abound in sea-shells



shells and marine productions. It is frequently said that the sea has left many places which were once covered by it. Is it not rather to be supposed that those places have been elevated above the sea, than that the sea has sunk below them? There seems to be no cause in nature equal to the altering the quantity of water in the ocean, but we know that there are many causes equal to the elevating the land above it. If the sea had retired from the land, the retiring must have been equal in all places; this we are sure is not the case, therefore it is the land in that particular place that must be risen.

In the manner I suppose all land to have been first brought to light,

many islands have been produced in our own time. What was under the water is forced above it. The marine substances on the surface by degrees decay; moss appears, grass succeeds, then the smaller kind of plants, bushes and trees. Animal life begins and goes on upon the same scale from the minuter, to beings of more consequence. This system is at least as general as the other, but like that must be received with many restrictions; for it is certain that by far the greater part of vegetables and animals would never be found self-produced in any one place, tho' many might live, and indeed flourish, if brought there.

Let

Let us proceed from reasoning to facts. Some voyager discovers an island evidently formed by a vulcano, and very remote from other countries; it is a perfect wood to the water's edge, has some plants which exist no where but in that spot, together with others common to places in the same latitude. It is full of insects, reptiles, birds, and sometimes quadrupeds. Now, if *every one* of these organized bodies was not brought there, something must be self-produced.

In some islands of the East-Indies are serpents of an enormous size; who could carry them there? In all streams there are fish—how could they get there? Not from the sea, for fish which inhabit the source of  
rivers

rivers are as soon killed by salt water as in air, besides there are many rivers which do not run into the ocean. Perhaps this circumstance was never sufficiently considered. Every set of rivers is perfectly distinct from any other set. The greater number have some fish which exist no where but in the particular stream they are bred. Find any other cause for their first production than what must be taken from the old philosophy.

Let us attend to what we have always near us. Fill a vessel with water from the pump: it is pure, and contains neither animal, nor vegetable. After standing some days, a green substance begins to be formed in it, and which is inhabited by myriads of little beings: this

this seems the first step towards plants and animals. We are told indeed that the animalcules are from eggs laid by flies, and the green slime is a plant which has its proper feed. That the water may accidentally receive both eggs and feeds is highly probable; but these (by reasoning from other instances) seem the first efforts towards vegetable and animal life. Besides, it yet remains to be proved, that the air so abounds with flying feeds and insects. If the air swarmed, as is supposed, vision would be obstructed (as by a fog which consists of particles inconceivably small), and perhaps life in the nobler animals destroyed. The slime to be produced from seed then must have  
 come

come from some of the same sort in the neighbourhood; besides, if its being produced in the water depended upon accident, which it does by this supposition, it must sometimes fail. Again, if the animals and vegetables, in the above instance, were from eggs floating in the air, why are the smallest always produced first? must it not sometimes happen that ova of a larger sort precede the smaller? which is never the case: not to mention the total impossibility of some ova, particularly of animals, being so conveyed.

It is well known that by pepper-water, and a variety of other mixtures, peculiar animalcules are produced. Can we suppose that the  
fly

fly, which lays the egg from which this creature exists, continues floating in the air until some philosopher makes a mixture proper for its deposit? is it done often enough to preserve the species? What must the fly have done before pepper was brought from India? You may tell me that the egg was deposited there—well then, if the eggs are not hurt by the pepper being dried in an oven, happen to be brought to Europe, and fall in the way of a naturalist, the species is preserved. Much is not got by this. There is great reason for believing that the animalcule was really produced by the infusion, and did not exist before.

How are the worms in human bodies to be accounted for? There  
are

are some, it is true, which bear a resemblance to earth-worms, and are supposed to be eggs we take in with roots, vegetables, &c. Not to insist upon the impossibility of a creature intended to live in the cold earth existing ~~on~~<sup>in</sup> the hot stomach, it is well known that there are worms in the intestines which have no resemblance to any other thing in the creation—the jointed worm, for instance, which is found of many yards in length: indeed, if some accounts are to be credited, of some scores of yards. Where does this animal exist except in the stomach where it is found? Sheep, dogs, horses, &c. breed worms peculiar to themselves. I have seen frequently between the sound and  
back-



back-bone of a whiting, long worms that were evidently bred there. As I have no system to support, I shall have no objection if you can account for these facts according to the present philosophy—but to me it seems absolutely impossible.

I may strengthen every thing I have advanced on self-production with additional arguments, and those from instances on the largest scale. The old and new continents are two immense islands. You will get little by supposing them once joined at Kamchatka. What should ever induce those animals which are never seen out of a hot climate, to travel so far North as the Strait between the continents? They do not approach

approach it now, why should they then? Besides, has not each continent some creatures peculiar to itself? Did those in America come from countries where no such animals exist? If they did not, and are found in America only, what is the fair conclusion?

When an inhabitant of the old continent asks how America was peopled, why does the question stop there? How was it supplied with vegetables and animals? particularly river-fish; and whence came those creatures that exist nowhere else? Pray, what is to hinder an American from reversing the question? When did our people, he may say, first migrate and give inhabitants to the Eastern world?

What

What answer can be given to these questions consistent with the present system of philosophy?

There is something in the sound of self-production which seems like a contradiction. I mean nothing more by it, than that a vegetable or animal does in many instances first exist by a different principle than that upon which the species is afterwards continued. As the term does not exactly express this, it may easily be perverted from the sense in which I wish to be understood. Perhaps we shall find that self-production shocks the imagination more or less according to the *size* of the thing produced. Who would not sooner believe that cheese breeds mites, than that deserts produce elephants?

And yet, according to our present philosophy, one is as possible as the other.

If the consequences I have drawn from these facts appear to you wrong, or the facts themselves ill-supported—convince me of my error, and the whole shall be retracted as freely as it is advanced by

Yours most faithfully, &c.

LETTER

## L E T T E R XXV.

THO' I hate to set out upon the principle of word-hunting, yet it always gives me pleasure when by accident I can trace the meaning of a word or phrase to its source, and pursue it through its various changes to its present state. The pleasure is still greater to mark the gradual refinement of language from obscurity and barbarism, until it arrives at precision and elegance. Our tongue, as every one knows, is a compound of many.—The pains which William the Conqueror

took to graft his Norman French upon it, succeeded in many instances, and there are others where we may trace the dying away of the French by degrees, and the English resuming its old place. Chaucer in his character of the Monk, says

He was a lord full fat and in *good point*.

This is the remains of the French *embonpoint*, or as it was written then *en bon point*.—The phrase was wearing out in Chaucer's time, the *en bon* being translated, and *point* preserved. Now, the whole is translated, and we say *in good case*, or *plight*.—You may find many other instances of this in the old poets.

“ The

“The days are now a cock-stride longer,” say the country-folks at Twelfth-day—and many have been the conjectures upon the derivation of this phrase (see the Gentleman’s Magazine). It is not cock-stride, but cock’s-tread. In the country, *tread* is pronounced *trede*, (not *tred*)—and in most of the western counties, Devonshire excepted, *stride* has more of the *e* than *i* in its sound.—But the impossibility of expressing by any known signs the different provincial modifications of the sound of the vowels, has occasioned some strange mistakes when people of one county endeavour to write down an expression used in another. Our old poets, who generally writ in the

F 3                      dialect

dialect of the province where they resided, and spelt as well as they could with their own country vowels, have given birth to much laughable criticism.

*Help-mate* is an odd corruption. In the Book of Genesis it is said, "it is not good for man to be alone, I will make an help meet for him"—that is an help, *proper* for him—*meet* is an adjective. But these two words, like the first man and his help, soon became one, and of late have been corrected into *help-mate*.

As I was reading John Struys's voyages the other day, I thought I discovered the original of the word, and perhaps of the liquor, punch; which, if I am right, has nothing  
to



to do with that diverting personage in puppet-shews of the same name, from whom it is usually derived. Struys was at Gomroon in Persia, where he says, he drank——“ A liquor much in use there, called *pale punshen*, being compounded of arak, sugar, and raisins, which is so bewitching that they cannot refrain from drinking it.” I really believe he *forgot* to mention the water—for how in such a climate as the southern part of Persia it was possible to drink undiluted arak, I have no conception. The raisins have given place, and very properly, to lemons. But I had better leave this to its own merits.—I am afraid it will not bear too minute an examination—remember it is only

*humbly* offered together with the other conjectures of

Yours, &c.

As Struys's Voyages is a scarce book, I might with great ease have practised the common trick of authors, and introduced *water* into the quotation without fear of discovery. It being supposed that few will give themselves the trouble to turn to the original book to examine extracts, authors have been made to give evidence to facts, "of which they nothing know," and to support systems which never had existence, but in the imagination of the writer who presses them into his service.

LETTER

## L E T T E R    XXVI.

**T**HE rubs and difficulties which the public throw in the way of a genius at his first appearance; are frequently too great to be surmounted.

We are apt to form our opinion of a man's abilities, by his resemblance to some other man of reputation in the art or science he professes. A painter, musician, or author perfectly new we are afraid to commend—like hounds, we wait for the opening of one whose cry we may venture to follow.—But it  
should

should be remembered that a sure mark of a genius is originality. As he is original, and therefore new, perhaps it may be necessary to conquer some prepossessions before we can judge of his merit; and as he is generally incapable, from that modesty which so frequently attends ability, of insisting on his own excellencies, the world should take that task from him.— But does it so? Or from the fear of commending too hastily, leave a Being to languish in obscurity, which should be protected and encouraged. The greatest part of those who seem to have been born to make mankind happy, were themselves miserable. A melancholy catalogue might be made of these.

these. If we know any thing of Homer, it is, that he ran about ballad-singing. Poor, unhappy, half-starved Cervantes, Camöens, Butler, Fielding! Does it not grieve you to be told that the author of *Tom Jones* lies in the factory's burying-ground at Lisbon, undistinguished, unregarded—not a stone to mark the place! And would it not raise our indignation to behold stately monuments erected for those whose names were never heard of, until they appeared in their epitaph? —were they not considered rather as monuments of the sculptor's art, than as preserving the memory of the persons whose dust they so pompously cover.

The

The instances of those original geniuses who in their life-time have enjoyed the public applause and lived by it, are very few—indeed I cannot recollect any—Garrick excepted. I do not consider Virgil or Pope in this light—they are not original. It is true that Shakspeare lived well enough, but the money he got was by acting, not writing. Milton was in tolerable circumstances, but if he had had nothing more to depend on than the profit arising from the sale of the finest poem in the world, he must have been starved.

It is common when we speak of a genius, to say, he will not be valued until he is dead—not that his death is essential to his reputation; but

but there is a necessity of his being known and understood, before he can be esteemed; and it generally happens that life is of too short duration for that purpose—

“ But the fair guerdon when we hope to  
find

And think to burst out into sudden blaze,  
Comes the blind Fury with th’ abhorred  
shears

And flits the thin-spun life.”————

LETTER

## L E T T E R    XXVII.

**A**LLITERATION very early made its appearance in English poetry. I have seen an old piece where it was intended to supply the place of rhyme: the terminations of each line were different; and there were in every one, three or four words which begun with the same letter. This I suppose was thought a beauty. Shakspeare in several places burlesques the improper use of Alliteration with great pleasantry. It was much in request



request in the days of Thompson  
 ——his

——Floor, faithless to the fuddled foot,  
 is scarce less ridiculous than Shakf-  
 peare's

Bravely broach'd his bloody boiling breast.

I believe wherever it is *perceived*,  
 it disgusts. There is something  
 very ridiculous in the pains of an  
 author when he is searching for a  
 set of words beginning with the  
 same letter: this surely argues a  
 "lack of matter." A man who  
 has *things* in his head, is never cu-  
 rious about *words*, unless it be  
 those which express his meaning  
 quickest and clearest. I would  
 have given something to have seen  
 the

the paper upon which *Smollet* first sketched the titles of some of his novels. I dare say it cost him as much time to fix upon the name *Roderick Random*, as to write some of the best parts in that sprightly and entertaining performance.—*Robert* and *Richard* were common, *Roger* and *Ralph* were vulgar—there was a necessity for a sounding uncommon name, and beginning with an *R*: at last, by a lucky chance *Roderick* occurred—and *Roderick* it is.—Do you think me fanciful? I call upon *Peregrine Pickle*, and *Ferdinand Fathom* to prove the contrary.

If we laugh at the hard-sought-for Alliteration of the poet and historian, may we not laugh a little louder

louder at that of the comic dramatist? Can any language be less that of nature or common conversation, than strings of words beginning with an M or N? And yet this has been done by one who paints the "Manners living as they rise." It is surprizing that so sprightly a genius as Foote could submit to the drudgery of consulting his spelling-book for words proper to be paired—my three *ppp's* put me in mind of a letter in the Student, in which *p* is predominant—it is highly humorous and well worth your perusing.

Will you give me leave to make an abrupt transition from Alliteration to *Literation*, and pardon me also for coining?

The Germans in pronouncing English, and writing it too, if they have not studied the language, almost constantly change *b* into *p*, *d* into *t*, *g* (hard) into *k*, *v* into *f*, and the reverse. This peculiarity of theirs, I find, upon recollection, is not confined to English. In the Burletta of *La buona Figliola*, the author makes his German character to say *trompetti* and *tampurri*—nay they serve their own language the same, as I have observed from their pronunciation of proper names of cities, &c. it seems difficult to account for this——but perhaps not more so than for the trick of the French in giving an aspirate to those English words where there is  
none,

none, and omitting it where it should be used.—I once saw a French-man much surprized, (not disconcerted) at a general laugh when he was comparing our country women with his—an unlucky misplaced aspirate was all the cause —“ The English ladies,” says he, “ are so plain, but the French ladies are so *‘airy!’*”

## L E T T E R XXVIII.

**T**HOUGH superstition is pretty well laughed away, yet there are some points in which we can never get the better of it. The wedding ring in coffee grounds—the coffin in the candle—the stranger in the fire, are marked by none but vulgar and foolish eyes. You see salt spilt, hear death-watches—owls hoot—dogs howl, and despise the omen—you are above it. But yet let me ask *you*, an enlightened philosopher—Whether you are above choice of seats at whist? Whether you  
have

have not really believed that your chance for winning was much bettered by your taking the fortunate chairs, and of course obliging your adversaries to sit, not in those of the scornful, but of the losers? When you quit the game on a run of ill luck, what is it but declaring your belief that the games already played have an influence upon those which are to come?

Each ticket in a lottery has an equal chance——do you think so? Number 1000 got the great prize in the last lottery—now, confess honestly that you feel something within that tells you the same number can never win the great prize again—you would prefer every other number to it—and yet rea-

son says, that all the tickets have an equal probability of success. In these instances and many others, superstition, even in cultivated minds, will be always more than a match for truth.

A gentleman coming a passenger in a vessel from the West-Indies, finding it more inconvenient to be shaved than to wear his beard, chose the latter—but he was not suffered to have his choice long—it was the unanimous opinion of the sailors, and indeed of the Captain as well, that there was not the least probability of a wind as long as this ominous beard was suffered to grow. They petitioned—they remonstrated, and at last prepared to cut the fatal hairs by violence.

Now,



Now, as there is no operation at which it is so much the patient's interest to consent, as that of the barber——the gentleman quietly submitted——nor could the wind resist the potent spell which instantly filled all their sails, and “wafted them merrily away.”

You see we have only got rid of *general* superstition, we still retain that which belongs to our particular profession or pursuits.

Adieu.

## L E T T E R    XXIX.

**I** Have often tryed to have a proper idea of vast space—great numbers—enormous size and such subjects, and as you may suppose, without success. But though I fail in getting a competent idea, I sometimes make an approach towards it, which is better than nothing.

The solar system is one of these sublime subjects in the consideration of which I have frequently been lost. I never attempted to conceive the size of the sun, or the  
distance

distance of saturn; the impossibility instantly repels the most daring imagination. No, all that I have attempted is to have a just idea of the proportion (upon any scale) that the sun and planets bear to each other in respect to size and distance. At first sight, this seems easily done — Draw some concentric circles on a sheet of paper, make the sun the centre, and place the planets round in their order.—Or if you would have an idea of their motion as well, look at an orrery. But a little examination will convince you that this is doing nothing towards having an idea of their size and distance in proportion to each other, which is the point sought. Nay, it is worse than nothing, for  
it

it imposes a falsity as a reality. Imagination by itself can do a great deal, if assisted it can do more, but if perverted, nothing. Let us try to assist the imagination then.

If the sun be only a million times bigger than the earth, (exactness is of no consequence to my argument, so that I am within the truth) it is plain that I cannot make two circles upon a sheet of paper (without considering any thing about distance) that can bear this proportion to each other; and if this cannot be done for the earth, much less can it for other planets and moons where the disproportion is greater. Let us take the floor of a large room—on this make a circle of two feet diameter for the sun—the size of  
the

the earth will be about a large pin's head. The distance of the sun from the earth is about eighty of the sun's diameters; if so, there must be a circle of three hundred and twenty feet diameter for the earth's orbit, which no room, nor indeed any other building, will contain. Let us try a field——here we may put our sun and draw the earth's orbit round. If we stand in the center (which we should do) the earth is too small to be seen. These difficulties occurring so soon, how will they increase when we take in the superior planets? The ingenious Ferguson has endeavoured to assist our imagination by supposing St. Paul's dome, in diameter one hundred and forty-five feet, to be the  
sun

sun—upon this scale, Mercury is between nine and ten inches, and placed at the Tower; Venus near eighteen, at St. James's Palace; the Earth eighteen, at Marybone; Mars ten, at Kensington; Jupiter fifteen feet, at Hampton-Court; and Saturn eleven feet and half, at Cliffden. Let us be on the top of the dome, and look for the planets where he has placed them. Do you think we could see any thing of Jupiter and Saturn? to say nothing of their moons—or that we could conceive properly the difference between four miles and twenty, when seen on a line? the four may be two, or one mile; and the twenty may be ten, or thirty, for ought we can judge by the appearance.

pearance. All that we get by this is the knowing that a sheet of paper or an orrery give us wrong ideas, and that we cannot by any contrivance put the size and distance of the planets upon a proportionable scale, so as to take in the whole with our eye or understanding.

We are as much at a loss to comprehend the slowness of their motion—I have not mistaken—I mean slowness.—A circuit which is six or twelve months or twice as many years performing, is slow almost beyond conception; and yet this motion is called whirling—as if the planets went round their orbits like a top! Though quick and slow are comparative terms, we have ideas of each arising from the medium.

medium of the two, from observation, and common application, that do not stand in need of any comparison to be understood. The motion of a flea is quick; of a snail, slow; and the common walk of a man is neither quick nor slow. Let us imagine an elephant to walk, and a flea to hop the same distance in the same time — would you hesitate to say that the motion of the one was slow, and the other quick? In short, swiftness or slowness does not depend upon the absolute quantity of ground the animal passes in a certain time, but upon the relative quantity to its own size. The earth is about eight minutes in moving the space of one diameter, therefore  
its



its absolute motion is slow—it is twenty-four hours making one revolution round its axis, which gives no idea of velocity. It is certain that if we were placed very near the earth (unaffected by its attraction) there would appear an exceeding quick change of surface—and so would the motion of a snail appear to an animalcule. The quantity of space when compared to any we can move in the same time is vast, and the motion quick, but when considered as belonging to a body of the size of a world, the motion is slow. Suppose a common globe was turned round once in twenty-four hours—imagine an animal as much inferiour to it in size as we are to the earth, placed

as

as I conceived the human spectator placed to view the earth—would the apprehension of this Being induce you to call a single revolution in twenty-four hours, whirling? Would not you say that though the surface passed quick in review before him, yet that the absolute motion of the whole was exceedingly slow. Perhaps it is our measuring this motion by miles that makes us fancy that it is quick, which is much like taking the height of a mountain in hairs-breadths. When we are told that Saturn moves in his orbit more than twenty-two thousand miles in an hour, we conceive the velocity to be great; but when we find that he is more than three hours moving his own diameter

meter, we must then think it as it really is, slow. Bishop Wilkins is the only writer I have met with who considers the motion of the heavenly bodies as I do, and I am rather proud of having my opinion supported by so great a man.

There is another circumstance which prevents the solar system, as commonly delineated, from bearing a true resemblance to the apparent position and motion of the planets. It is always drawn in plan instead of section, whereas the *appearance* of the orbits of the heavenly bodies is always in section and never can be in plan. This difference is not, as far as I know, noticed in any account of the solar system; and yet if it be not attended to, it is

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impossible to prove the truth of the system by the apparent paths of the planets. This will be best understood by considering the inferior ones. Mercury and Venus remove to a certain distance from the sun, and then, after seeming at rest, return in nearly the same line and remove to the same distance on the other side, where the same thing is repeated. This to the eye is not a revolution in plan, but a revolution in section—and this might be explained by a draught which should always accompany the common delineation of the planetary orbits.

LETTER

## L E T T E R    X X X .

**I**T is so long since that I sent you the first part of my observations on Quarles that perhaps you have forgot my promise for the remainder.—I will now resume the subject.

Quarles sometimes introduces personages, and makes his poem of the dramatic cast. The sixth hieroglyphic is a dialogue between *Time* and *Death*; as usual, alluding to the print, where *Death* is going to extinguish the taper, but is prevented by *Time*. There are a

H 2
few

few awkward expressions in this, which are easier to be overlooked than omitted.

*Time.*

*Death.*

*Time.* Behold the frailty of this slender snuff;  
 Alas! it hath not long to last;  
 Without the help of either thief or puff,  
 Her weakness knows the way to waste:  
 Nature hath made her substance apt enough  
 To spend itself, and spend too fast:  
 It needs the help of none  
 That is so prone  
 To lavish out untouch'd, and languish all alone.

*Death.* *Time*, hold thy peace, and shake thy flow-  
 pac'd sand;  
 Thine idle minutes make no way:  
 Thy glass exceeds her hour, or else doth stand,  
 I cannot hold, I cannot stay.  
 Surcease thy pleading, and enlarge my hand,  
 I surfeit with too long delay:  
 This brisk this bold-fac'd light  
 Doth burn too bright;  
 Darkness adorns my throne, my day is darkest  
 night.

*Time.*

*Time.* Great Prince of darkness ! hold thy needfuls  
 hand,  
 Thy captive's fast and cannot flee :  
 What arm can rescue ? who can countermand ?  
 What pow'r can set thy pris'ner free ?  
 Or if they could ; what close, what foreign land  
 Can hide that head that flees from thee ?  
 But if her harmless light  
 Offend thy sight  
 What need'st thou snatch at noon, what must  
 be thine at night ?

*Death.* I have outstaid my patience ; my quick trade  
 Grows dull and makes too slow return :  
 This long-liv'd debt is due, and should been paid  
 When first her flame began to burn :  
 But I have staid too long, I have delay'd  
 To store my vast, my craving urn.  
 My patent gives me pow'r  
 Each day, each hour,  
 To strike the peasant's thatch, and shake the  
 princely tow'r.

*Time.* Thou count'st too fast : thy patent gives no pow'r  
 Till Time shall please to say, Amen.

*Death.* Canst thou appoint my shaft ? *Time.* Or thou  
 my hour ?

*Death.* 'Tis I bid, do. *Time.* 'Tis I bid, when ;

H 3

Alas !

Alas ! thou canst not make the poorest flow'r  
To hang the drooping head 'till then :

Thy shafts can neither kill,  
Nor strike, until

My power gives them wings, and pleasure arms  
thy will !

There is nothing which destroys the *reality* in a dramatic dialogue more than when the speakers ask questions and reply in an equal quantity of lines. Perhaps the most disgusting instance of this is in Milton's *Mask*, where Comus and the Lady have a verse each alternately, for fourteen lines together. We are more sensible of the sameness in quantity where it is so short, and so often repeated, than here in Quarles where it is extended to a stanza, and that repeated for each speaker but once—  
but



but even here you begin to feel its bad effect, when it is finely relieved towards the end by the characters growing warmer in their dispute, and, of course, making their speeches shorter. Yet what I here condemn, others admire.—You, who are so fond of the ancients, may easily defend this practice by their example, and if you want any assistance to demolish me, may call in Mr. West and the author of the *Origin and Progress of Language*.—This passage of the former from his translation of the *Iphigenia* of Euripides is quoted by the latter with great commendations—not indeed because the dialogue is in alternate verse, but for its being a fine imitation of the ancient trochaic measure.

*Ipb.* Know'st thou what should now be ordered?

*Tbo.* 'Tis thy office to prescribe.

*Ipb.* Let them bind in chains the strangers.

*Tbo.* Canst thou fear they should escape?

*Ipb.* Trust no Greek; Greece is perfidious.

*Tbo.* Slaves depart, and bind the Greeks.

*Ipb.* Having bound, conduct them hither, &c.

It is true that here the reply wants one of having the same number of syllables as the question—but still the constant return of the same quantity for each speaker is disgusting to all unprejudiced ears. You will tell me that it is in the high gusto of the antique, and that the feet are trochaics—I can only reply, that hard words cannot convince me contrary to reason, and if a proper effect is not produced, it is of very little consequence to me whether the authority is brought from Greece or Siberia. Horace's  
often-

often-quoted *Pallida mors*, &c. was perhaps never better translated than at the end of the fourth stanza.

The ninth hieroglyphic will put you in mind of the poems that are squeezed or stretched into the form of axes, altars, and wings—but if you will attend to the matter, and not the form, you will find it excellent—to write this properly requires some care.

*Behold*

How short a span  
Was long enough of old  
To measure out the life of man;  
In those well-temper'd days, his time was then  
Survey'd, cast up, and found but threescore years and ten!

*Alas!*

And what is that?  
They come, and slide, and pass,  
Before my pen can tell thee what.  
The posts of Time are swift, which having run  
Their sev'n short stages o'er, their short-liv'd task is done.

*Our*

*Our days*

Begun, we lend  
To sleep, to antick plays  
And toys, until the first stage end:  
12 waining moons, twice 5 times told, we give  
To unrecover'd loss: we rather breathe than live.

*We spend*

A ten years breath  
Before we apprehend  
What 'tis to live, or fear a Death:  
Our childish dreams are fill'd with painted joys  
Which please our sense a while, and waking prove but toys!

*How vain*

How wretched is  
Poor man, that doth remain  
A slave to such a state as this!  
His days are short, at longest; few at most;  
They are but bad at best; yet lavish'd out, or lost.

*They be*

The secret springs  
That make our minutes flee  
On wheels more swift than eagle's wings!  
Our Life's a clock, and ev'ry gasp of breath  
Breathes forth a warning grief, till Time shall strike a Death!

*How*

[ III ]

*How soon*

Our new-born light  
Attains to full-ag'd noon !  
And this, how soon to grey-hair'd night !  
We spring, we bud, we blossom and we blast  
E'er we can count our days, our days they flee so fast !

*They end*

When scarce begun ;  
And e'er we apprehend  
That we begin to live, our life is done :  
Man count thy days ; and if they fly too fast  
For thy dull thoughts to count, count ev'ry day the last.

Methinks Quarles's ghost is at my elbow, which will not be appeased unless I remark that the first lines of each stanza make a verse, being the text on which the poem is a comment.

*Behold, alas! our days we spend ;  
How vain they be, how soon they end !*

This is a kind of false wit once much in request. Jarvis, the translator

lator of Don Quixote, calls it *glossing*—upon what authority I know not. In the first chapter of the second book of the second volume may be found a text and gloss—with this difference from Quarles's, that the text is introduced at the end of the stanza and not at the beginning.

It is impossible to avoid smiling at the pains he must have taken to preserve the form of the stanza—in the third he is obliged to have the assistance of figures, or his line would have been too long; and after all his trouble there must be some for the reader before he has calculated how much “12 moons, twice 5 times told,” are—in the rest, to say the truth, it is not so apparent. If this pyramidical  
stanza

stanza prevents you from attending to the poetry, it is easily put in another—of the two first lines make one; and the false wit immediately vanishes.—I hope Quarles's ghost vanished before I proposed the alteration.

I have, like a prudent caterer, reserved the best thing for the last. It is the twelfth emblem of the third book. The subject of the print is a figure trying to escape from the Divine vengeance which is pursuing in thunders: the motto—*O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me in secret until thy wrath be past!* Upon this hint he has produced the following excellent poem.

Ah!

Ah! whither shall I fly? what path untrod  
Shall I seek out to 'scape the flaming rod  
Of my offended, of my angry God?

Where shall I sojourn? what kind sea will hide  
My head from thunder? where shall I abide,  
Until his flames be quench'd or laid aside?

What, if my feet should take their hasty flight,  
And seek protection in the shades of night?  
Alas! no shades can blind the God of light.

What, if my soul should take the wings of day,  
And find some desert? if she spring away  
The wings of vengeance clip as fast as they.

What, if some solid rock should entertain  
My frightened soul? can solid rocks restrain  
The stroke of Justice and not cleave in twain?

Nor sea, nor shade, nor shield, nor rock, nor cave,  
Nor silent deserts, nor the fullen grave,  
Where flame-ey'd fury means to smite, can save.

'Tis vain to flee; 'till gentle mercy shew  
Her better eye; the farther off we go,  
The swing of Justice deals the mightier blow.



Th' ingenuous child, corrected, doth not flie  
 His angry mother's hand, but clings more nigh,  
 And quenches with his tears her flaming eye.

Great God ! there is no safety here below ;  
 Thou art my fortress, thou that seem'st my foe,  
 'Tis thou that strik'st the stroke, must guard the blow.

Six stanzas, which though very good, yet being of less merit than the rest are omitted. It is obvious that he had the 139th psalm in his eye, of which he has made great use. The alarm at the beginning—the searching all nature for shelter—the impossibility of being hid from the author of nature—and the acquiescing at last in what was unavoidable, are grand and natural ideas. The motion of the wings of vengeance—and the recapitulation of the places where protection was sought in vain—are instances  
 of

of expression rarely met with. But what praise is sufficient for the simile in the eighth stanza? To say only that it is apposite and beautiful, comes very short of my sensations when I read it. Let me confess honestly that I think it one of the noblest instances of the sublime pathetic! As a part of a religious poem it is proper, in a high degree; the scripture frequently considering our connection with the Almighty as that of children with a parent.—As a picturesque image it is distinct, natural, and affecting.—But to remark all the beauties of this poem would be to comment on every stanza.—You will have more pleasure in finding them out yourself.

Now

Now what think you, is not this rather too good to be lost? Was it from never reading Quarles, or taking his character from common report, that Pope considered his productions as the very bathos of poetry? Poor Quarles! thou hast had many enemies, and art now forgotten. But thou hast at last found a friend—not equal, indeed, to the task of turning a tide that has been flowing for a hundred years against thee—not equal to his wishes for giving thee and every neglected genius his due share of reputation—but barely capable of laying the first stone of thy temple of fame, which he leaves to be compleated by abler and by stronger hands!

Farewel.

P. S. I had forgot to inform you that these emblems were imitated in Latin by one Herman Hugo, a Jesuit. The first edition of them was in 1623, soon after the appearance of Quarles ; and the book was reprinted for the ninth time in 1676, which last is the date of the copy in my possession. How many more editions there have been, I know not. He makes no acknowledgement to Quarles, and speaks of his own work as original. As a specimen of his manner, take the following, which is intended as an imitation of “ Ah whither shall I fly ? ”

*Quis mihi securis dabit hospita tecta latebris ?*

*Tecta, quibus dextræ server ab igne tuæ ?*

*Hæu ! tuus ante oculos quoties furor ille recursat,*

*Nulla mihi toties fida sat antra reor.*

*Tunc*

Tunc ego secretas, umbracula frondea, sylvas,  
Lustrâque solivagis opto relicta feris.

Tunc ego vel mediis timidum caput abdere terris,  
Aut maris exesâ condere rupe velim, &c.

It reads but poorly after the other, though I have given you the best of it. He afterwards by degrees quits his subject, runs into stuff about Cain and Jonah, and has entirely omitted the simile.

You express an inclination to publish my letters. You should consider that the date of some of them is so far back, that many allusions to passing incidents which might engage attention at the time, now must fail of their effect.—People are spoken of as living, who are dead—and many other objections might be enumerated.

However,

However, you are at liberty to do what you please with them. Those which are of a private nature, your prudence will, of course, keep to yourself: and for the others, where some conjectures are hazarded which may be thought different from received opinions; the writer wishes them to be read with the same impartiality they were written——though he is well apprized of the difficulty of dispossessing old opinions.

*F I N I S.*



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